Through the Bible Day by Day

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

F. B. Meyer

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THE ASCENSION. Acts 1: 6-11.

From Painting by G. PIERMANN. Modern German Artist.

Through the Bible Day by Day

A Devotional Commentary

BY

REV. F. B. MEYER

Arranged for Daily Reading, with Book Introductions, Outlines and Review Questions

Illustrated from Paintings by Modern Artists

VOLUME VI

ACTS TO EPHESIANS

PHILADELPHIA

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is need everywhere for the cultivation of the habit of reading some portion of God's Word *each day*. Such reading should be *consecutive*, for only thus can continuous interest be maintained. It may also be greatly helped by an *interpreter*, who will explain what is obscure as well as suggest applications of the message to the daily life.

To meet such need this series of seven volumes provides an arrangement of the books of the Bible in daily portions, with concise devotional comments. It includes all portions of the Bible most suitable for daily reading, either individually or in family groups.

As a *commentary on the whole Bible*, these volumes will be found valuable because they omit points of merely scholarly interest and fix attention upon the central message of each passage and its application to daily needs. There are frequent references to other parts of Scripture, especially from Old Testament truths to their New Testament fulfilment and interpretation.

Mr. Meyer's life-long experience in interpreting the Bible to the common people makes him pre-eminently fitted for this service—a crowning one in his world-wide ministry by voice and pen.

Introductions and outlines are provided for each Bible book. Review questions have been added at appropriate points, to enable readers to sum up and better preserve in memory what they have learned. The illustrations, selected from paintings of Bible scenes by modern artists, aid in the interpretation of the passages which they portray.

It is hoped that these volumes will prove of much value to Sunday-school teachers and adult scholars; will promote profitable Bible reading in connection with both family and private devotions; and will everywhere deepen a love for and an intelligent acquaintance with the one Book which can provide a fresh and helpful message for the needs of each new day.

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DAILY READING OF GOD'S WORD

The Bible is full of God's wisdom. It is the Word of God. We must read it not only with our head, but with our heart. An analysis of its contents is good and desirable; but when all this is done, we need to allow time for the inner wisdom, power and grace which are stored in the Book, to soak into our inner consciousness. Therefore, for some reasons, it is better to have a shorter portion for daily study, to give us time to get all the juice and marrow out of what we read.

This is the method followed in this system. Busy people, students, commercial men, Sunday-school workers and older scholars, soldiers and sailors, people on the hills and on the prairies, living on the edge of the great tides of human activity, will find these passages, selected for daily reading, ample to furnish a daily meal of truth, and yet deep and wide enough for profound inquiry and interest.

It has always seemed to me that the true way to know the Bible is to read it through. It is only so that we can follow the unveiling of the divine purpose, from the Dawn of Genesis to the Perfect Day of the divine writings of John. It is only so that we can obtain a connected view of the wide scope of Revelation. To read in different, unconnected passages, now of Poetry, now of History, now of Doctrine, prevents the mind from getting proper focus. We are apt by that method to concentrate on a few familiar passages, instead of listening to all that God has spoken to men's hearts. There is, probably, nothing more vital to an accurate knowledge of the Bible than the good

old practice of reading it thoughtfully and steadily through with such brief notes as this volume provides.

But let it always be remembered that the profoundest knowledge of the Word comes from the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit. Ask him to unlock and unfold its sacred mysteries. Ask him to reveal the glories of our Lord in every chapter. Ask him to enable you to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." Ask him, finally, to enable you to become not a forgetful hearer or reader, but a doer of the Word. See to it that your reading is combined with the faith that claims of God the fulfilment, in your own experience, of all he has promised. No prayer, therefore, is more salutary, as you open your Bible, morning by morning, than the familiar old words of the psalmist: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

F. B. Meyer.

I
THE BOOK OF THE ACTS

OUTLINE OF THE ACTS

"YE SHALL BE MY WITNESSES"

I. The Church in Jerusalem.....1:1—8:3.

The Ascension; Day of Pentecost; Peter and John Imprisoned; Ananias and Sapphira; Martyrdom of Stephen.

II. The Church in Judæa and Samaria 8:4—11:18.

Preaching of Philip; Simon Magus; The Ethiopian Eunuch; Conversion of Saul; Peter's Visit to Cornelius.

III. The Church in Antioch .....11:19—13:3.

The Disciples First Called Christians; The Work of Barnabas; Peter's Release from Prison; Death of Herod.

IV. Paul's Three Missionary Journeys. 13:4—21:16.

(1) With Barnabas, from Antioch through Asia Minor and Return. (2) With Silas, through Asia Minor to Greece, Returning to Antioch by way of Jerusalem. (3) Assisted by a Number of Disciples, through Asia Minor and Greece.

V. Paul in Jerusalem.. .....21:17—26:32.

Paul's Speech to the People; Paul before the Sanhedrin; Sent to Caesarea; before Felix; before Festus and Agrippa.

VI. Paul Sent to Rome .....27:1—28:31.

The Voyage and Shipwreck; Melita; Arrival in Rome; Paul's Residence There, with Continued Missionary Activity.

The authorship, by the Evangelist Luke, is established by a comparison of the address of his Gospel, v. 3, with Acts 1:1. Luke was eminently qualified for his task by his long and intimate association with the Apostle Paul. The place and hour of the commencement of their happy fellowship are fixed by the change in the pronoun in 16:10 from "they" to "we" and "us." Luke stayed with Paul to the end, 2 Tim. 4:11. During the long periods of Paul's imprisonment, his faithful friend and physician would have had ample opportunity for writing both the Gospel and this book.

The Acts is clearly a continuation of the life and ministry of the Redeemer. As the Gospel tells what he "began" to do and teach, so this treatise "continues" the story. There he wrought in a mortal body on earth; here in the body of his glory from heaven. The book is also a commentary on v. 2. We are not specifically informed what the commandments were which our Lord enjoined upon the Apostles, but are left to infer them from the ordering of the Church unfolded in these pages.

The division of the narrative is indicated in the enumeration of the widening concentric circles of v. 8. Jerusalem, chapters 1–7; Judaea and Samaria, 8:1–12; the uttermost parts of the earth, v. 13, and onward to the end of the book, which has no formal termination, because the Acts of the Holy Spirit by the Church have continued throughout the Christian centuries and are not yet finished. There are some illustrious chapters still to be added by the pen of the angel scribes, before the divine program is finished.

THROUGH THE BIBLE DAY BY DAY

THE BOOK OF THE ACTS

1. Beginning Afresh.

Acts 1:1-14. Luke informs Theophilus (the name means "a lover of God") that his Gospel told the story of what the Lord *began* to do and teach. Evidently this further book is a *continuation* of his deeds and words. It ought to be called "The Acts of the Ascended Christ." The Gospel tells of what Jesus did through a mortal body; and this book what he did through the Church, which is his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Here we learn that the time between the Resurrection and the Ascension was forty days; that our Lord issued commandments, no doubt about the ordering of the Church; and that he spoke with the Apostles of the coming kingdom of God —that ideal society which is God's great objective through the ages. It would not be established by the sword of the soldier, but by the witness-bearing of the evangelist, v. 8.

Then the Lord rose before their eyes, and passed within a cloud, which dropped like a curtain before him. He passed into heaven, Heb. 9:24, to make intercession, to guide the course of his Church, and to sit at the right hand of the Father till his enemies should be made his footstool.

2. Filling a Vacant Place.

Acts 1:15-26. It may be that the Apostles were acting upon Christ's directions, when they proceeded to the election of a successor to Judas. There was awe in Peter's voice, as he describes the traitor as the guide of the arresting band, although he had been num-

bered with the Apostles and had obtained part in their ministry. It was as though Peter felt that it might have been himself. He and the rest had stood at the brink of the precipice over which Judas had flung himself.

Evidently there were favored and humble men who, though they did not belong to the brotherhood, had been allowed to company with the Apostles, and had been witnesses of the marvelous story as it had been unrolled before their eyes. They were thus able to give their testimony first-hand. What an honor had been theirs! And now one of them was summoned to take the place of Judas. His qualification was his ability to bear witness to the Resurrection, v. 22. That was the salient point in the primitive evangel. But cannot we all bear witness to it? What but the resurrection of Jesus can account for the hot springs of religious fervor that arise in our wintry hearts!

3. Speaking in Strange Tongues.

Acts 2:1-13. The priests in the Temple were offering the first loaves of the new harvest, in celebration of the feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came as the first fruits of our inheritance. Suddenly there was a sound that was heard throughout the city. There was no wind, but the *sound* of a rushing, mighty wind. Suddenly, as each looked on the rest, he saw their heads crowned with tongues of flame. Each, too, became suddenly aware of a drawing toward the Lord, of a longing to see him glorified, and of a vast enlargement and enhancement of spiritual joy and power.

When presently the vast crowd collected to know the meaning of the sound, each inspired soul gathered a little knot of hearers, to whom he discoursed of Jesus and the Resurrection; and the hearers heard in their own tongue, *the wonderful works of God.* The Holy Spirit used the telepathy of mind and heart, so that involuntarily the speaker clothed his thoughts in

language borrowed from his hearer's vocabulary. This was the sign of Babel's undoing.

4. The Outpoured Spirit.

Acts 2:14-24. The exulting joy of these Spirit-anointed people was accounted for by some through charging them with drunkenness. Peter dismissed the charge as absurd, seeing that the day was yet young. With a readiness that the Spirit had inspired, he declared it to be a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. *This is that*, v. 16. Alas, we cannot say as much! This *might be* that; this *shall be* that;—these are all that we can affirm. Shall we ever be able to say, *This is that?*

In the pre-Christian times the Spirit was given to mountain-top saints, but from Pentecost onward, sons and daughters, old and young, servants and handmaidens, were to participate in his gracious influences. It is for the democracy of the Church, for the *whosoevers* who call on the name of the Lord, for the valleys as well as the hills.

Notice that God's determinate counsel and prearrangement did not take away the guilt that lay upon the murderers of the Christ. The hands that slew him were wicked ones, v. 23. But God vindicated Jesus by the Resurrection, which reversed the judgment of men and proved him the Son of God with power, Rom. 1:4.

5. David's Lord and Ours.

Acts 2:25-36. When one considers the vast result of this address, one wonders at its simplicity. It is almost entirely a string of apt quotations. But what may not the Word of God do, when it is wielded by the mighty Spirit! Our Lord might have chanted to himself vs. 26-28, when he descended, step by step, the dark staircase of death. God can never leave us in despair. At our lowest, he is nearest. There are ways up to life from the lowest deeps. David spake deeper

than he knew, v. 30. Here is an illustration of 1 Pet. 1: 11, 12.

In v. 33 we see the fulfillment of John 14:16. We can almost hear the Father asking what guerdon or reward he should give the Son for his obedience unto blood, and our Lord replying: "Father, I want nothing for myself, but only that I may receive into my divine-human nature the same fullness of the Holy Spirit that I had with thee before the worlds were made." And it pleased the Father that the fullness of the Godhead should dwell in him bodily, Col. 2:9. Then, because he was united to man by his humanity, he was able to impart to him the fullness of Pentecost.

6. Pentecostal Days.

Acts 2:37-47. There were no exceptions in Peter's great appeal for repentance. *Every one of you!* he declared. "But I drove the nails into his hands." *Every one of you!* he insists. "But I pierced his side." *Every one!* says the Apostle again. And from this motley crowd arose the primitive Church. Notice that those who had gone deep into sin are not required to serve a long novitiate between forgiveness and the gift of Pentecost. In v. 38 the two are combined. Notice also v. 39. Not only Jews, but far-off Gentiles—nay, as many as God shall call by his inward speech and grace, are welcome to receive the fullness of the Spirit. Have *you* received it?

The italics, *unto them*, in v. 41 had better be *unto him.* The adding was primarily to Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 8:5. From the teaching of the Apostles these new believers stepped up into fellowship with them, because, when we are joined to Christ, we become one with all who are his. They still met in the Temple, standing there as one vast host, and seeing a new significance in the ancient rites. Their homes and daily meals were also raised to a new level; and every day there were additions of those who had experienced Christ's saving power.

7. Uplifting Power.

Acts 3:1-10. Peter and John differed greatly, in age, in gift, and in point of view. They had been rivals; now they walked together. It was at three in the afternoon that this incident took place. As they climbed the Temple steps, they must have spoken of the many times that the Master had walked at their side. But they realized, too, that he was still as near as ever; and so they became the means of linking this withered man to his glorious health-giving power. It was because Jesus went with them that the healed man was able to become the fourth of the group.

The gate was beautiful, but it could not heal. More is needed than beauty or art. We may have neither the silver of profound intellect, nor the golden speech of Chrysostom, but we must see that we have something to give to a paralyzed and perishing world. Let us so move among men as to lead them to expect that we have something to give, and then give them Jesus. The lame man needed strength, and this is the divine gift of the gospel. "It is the *power* of God unto salvation." The Saviour makes us able to walk and leap in God's ways.

8. Searching Words.

Acts 3:11-26. Peter's sermon was delivered in the eastern colonnade of the Temple. It derived its name probably from the fact that Solomon's Porch had originally occupied that site. The Apostle argued that the gospel which was given them to proclaim was only the flower of the revelations which had been given them through the prophets. How vast the change wrought in this man by the strength and illumination imparted to him at Pentecost! Why should *we* not seek to be similarly infilled!

How humble;—not by their power! How daring;—God had glorified him whom they slew! What glorious conceptions of Christ;—Prince of Life, holy and righteous! What pity for the ignorance of the Jews! The

times of refreshing which are to come on this distracted world depend on the repentance and restoration of Israel. The Jew has the first offer of the gospel, as the child of the covenant; but its wide provisions lie open to us all, who by faith have become heirs of the promises made to Abraham. Christ begins his work of benediction for the soul by turning it away from iniquity. "Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned!"

9. The Name above Every Name.

Acts 4:1-12. The Sadducees are particularly mentioned, because they were the agnostics of the age, and had no belief in the unseen and eternal. The fact of our Lord's resurrection was, therefore, specially obnoxious to them. The captain of the Temple, who was head of the Levitical guard, was probably their nominee. How weak man shows himself when he sets himself against God! All that they could do was to shut the Apostles up; but they could not bind nor imprison the Living Spirit or the speech of one saved soul to another, and so the numbers of disciples kept mounting up.

Peter must have contrasted this with his former appearance in that hall. *Then* he trusted his own power; *now* he was specially filled with the Holy Spirit for a great and noble confession. The name of Jesus stands for his glorious being. It was because the man had come into vital union with the ever-living Christ, that disease was stayed and health restored. The name of Jesus rings through these chapters like a sweet refrain. Evidently he was living and at hand, or the streams of power and grace could not have poured forth to make desert lives begin to blossom as the garden of the Lord.

10. Braving Men To Obey God.

Acts 4:13-22. Do people realize that there is something about us which cannot be accounted for except that we have been with Jesus? Our company always

influences us. A man is known by the company he keeps. Good manners are caught by association with the well-mannered. What, then, will not be the effect upon us, if only we live in fellowship with Jesus! Our faces will shine with a reflection of his purity and beauty; and the ancient prayer will be answered, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," Ps. 90:17.

Our converts are our best arguments. *The man which was healed* (was) *standing with them*—his face suffused with the light of a new energy and hope. That fact answered all the sophistries of these Jewish leaders. It was as impossible to stay the effect of that miracle as to bid the sun cease shining. Note the exuberance of the life of God! *We cannot but speak*, v. 20. When once we have got the real thing, we cannot and dare not be still; we *must* speak. As the swelling seed will break down a brick wall, so when the love of Christ constrains us, though all the world is in arms, we must bear witness to our Lord.

11. Help from on High.

Acts 4:23-35. Like draws to like; Judas went to his own place, and the Apostles to their own company. The best answer to threats is prayer. The Apostles' one petition just then was for boldness. They scorned to ask for their own safety; it was enough if Jesus was glorified.

What a note of jubilant triumph was in that glorious prayer, offered by this threatened little band! They realized that they were under the special protection of God, who had made the world, had spoken by the prophets, and was the Father of Jesus. They thought that more miracles of healing would promote their cause; but, though they did not realize it at the time, their unity, love, hope, willingness to share their goods, coupled with their intrepid bearing, were their most potent arguments. Notice that in their consciousness, it was *God's* hand that was being stretched out to heal, though *their* hands were the immediate

channel of its beneficent operations. They had been filled before, but they were filled again. It is our privilege to claim repeated infillings to make good our leakage and evaporation.

12. Lying to the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:36—5:11. The Spirit of God is the source of generous and liberal giving. It is a poor substitute to set up bazaars, and fairs, and ice cream suppers. When the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit, her pockets will be easily emptied before his gracious, thawing presence. Let the sun arise in the heavens, and the frozen streams are instantly liberated and begin to sing on their way to transform wildernesses into gardens.

Mark the contrast between Ananias and Barnabas. The same phrases are applied to each. The sin of Ananias was not in keeping back part of the purchase money, but in pretending to have brought all to the Apostle. He wished to pose as a saint, and at the same time to line his own nest. In the act of consecration, we must not allow one corner for Satan or selfishness to possess, because instantly we shall have to concede the right of way, and a thoroughfare will be opened, along which all manner of contraband may be smuggled in. Peter had no doubt as to the *personality* of the Holy Spirit. You cannot lie to an *influence!* Note the interchange of *Holy Spirit* and *God* in vs. 3 and 4.

13. Delivered To Testify.

Acts 5:12-26. While the Holy Spirit works mightily *within* the Church, he co-operates with it in its *outward* operations by adding men and women to the Lord. None should be added to the Church roll who have not already been led into living union with Jesus. Through the Church, as his body, the risen Saviour works such miracles as are here narrated, filling the

hearts of the humble with love and joy, and exciting inveterate hatred in his foes.

The angel of God comes to open prison doors. Are you in sore trouble, from which there is no apparent deliverance? Are you imprisoned in the dungeon of doubt and black despair? Are you being heavily persecuted? Oh, wrap around you the divine protection! Dare to believe that the doors will open as by unseen hands. Nothing can stay the purposes of God. Only use your God-given liberty to go forth to teach the people. The gospel is a message to *the people*. Let us preach to the hungry, needy crowds. Philosophers, scientists, the wise and prudent of the age, may mock, but the people know the gospel when they hear it. Let us give it to them!

14. Folly of Fighting Against God.

Acts 5:27-42. The high priest and his party could not forget the imprecation of Matt. 27:25. It haunted them. Compare Peter's description of the Cross as *the tree* with Deut. 21:23 and Gal. 3:13; also his own usage of the phrase in 1 Pet. 2:24. Notice in v. 31 the divine order;—Jesus must be Prince, if he is to be Saviour. It is because that order is not observed, and men therefore seek to derive his benefits before they concede his rights, that he is unable to deliver them. Christ must be the enthroned Lord and Master of your life, if you want to be saved to the uttermost. See Rom. 10:9, R.V. Repentance is his gift equally as forgiveness. Mark that reference to the witness of the Holy Spirit, v. 32. Let us never stand in pulpit or class without being first assured that the truth we utter is such that he can endorse.

Gamaliel had been Paul's teacher. He was very astute and non-committal. He said, "Let us wait and see; the truth will conquer." He expected that the new enthusiasm would die down if it were let alone. He knew that a draught of wind fans a fire. But he lived to see his mistake. We must be warned by v. 42

not only to preach Christ as king in the Temple, but also at home.

15. Meeting Murmuring Within and Persecution Without.

Acts 6:1-15. The Grecians here mentioned were Jews who had lived abroad and spoke Greek. There were as yet no Gentiles in the Church. It was regarded as an annex to Judaism, and people had to become Jews before they were admitted to its privileges.

What a glimpse is here afforded of the simplicity and fervor of the primitive Church! The daily ministration of relief; the choice of godly men to attend to secular details; the prime importance of prayer and the ministry of the Word; the recognition by the Apostles of the rights of the people—all is so spiritual and so worthy of the era of the Holy Spirit. Alas, that so fair a dawn should ever have been overcast!

The Church must dedicate to God those whom she has chosen under the guidance of his Spirit. Stephen on the one hand, and Saul on the other, were the leaders of their respective parties. We see traces of the latter in the references to *them of Cilicia*, v. 9. Stephen's enemies prevailed over him by brute force, but he was conqueror through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony.

16. Stephen's Defense: God's First Called Ones.

Acts 7:1-13. There are several touches in this eloquent apology which deserve notice. *Verse 2:* "The God of glory." This chapter begins and ends with glory. See v. 55. Note that God appeared to Abraham in Ur, *before* he had come to Haran at the divine bidding. It is interesting to have this discrimination between the different appearances of God to the patriarch. *Verse 3:* We often have to leave our land before God shows us another. *Verse 6:* God's promises lighted up the weary bondage of Egypt. *Verse 10:* It is God that delivers

us out of our afflictions and gives us favor with people.

The drift of the whole speech, which must be borne in mind as we read it, is that again and again the Chosen People had rejected their God-sent deliverers and prophets, and had taken their own evil courses. The rejection of the Saviour was only a parallel to that of Joseph by his brethren, and that of Moses by the nation. Israel had always been stiffnecked and froward, and ought not history to warn Stephen's hearers against taking a similar attitude towards Jesus of Nazareth? Might not Jesus prove to be as great a blessing in that generation as Joseph or Moses had been in his? The parallel will be complete when Jesus returns in power and glory.

17. Stephen's Defense: The Deliverer from Bondage.

Acts 7:14-29. Moses, we are here told, was "mighty in words"; that is, in eloquence as well as in deeds. This confirms the statement of the Jewish historian, Josephus, that in the earlier part of his career, now lost in the oblivion of history, Moses led a very successful Egyptian expedition against Ethiopia. He complains to the Lord, in Exod. 4:10, of being slow of speech, but that probably refers to the habit of long disuse amid the silence and loneliness of the desert.

It is clear that, stung by the sense of wrong, Moses at first interfered with his own right arm to deliver his people. He smote the Egyptian, and essayed to judge between his brethren. God had to bring him into the dust by repeated failure and rejection that he might become an emptied and a broken vessel. God will not give glory to man. The treasure must be held in an earthen vessel, 2 Cor. 4:7. It is when we come to the end of ourselves that we arrive at the beginning of God. The world has ever to learn what God can do by those who are wholly emptied of self-confidence but yielded to his hand.

18. Stephen's Defense: Disobedience in the Wilderness.

Acts 7:30-46. The angel who appeared in the bush that burned with fire was the angel of God's presence, who saved the Israelites and bare them and carried them all the days of old. See Isa. 63:9. Who could this be save our Lord himself? Only he could speak of himself as *I am.* Remember the use our Lord made of that present tense, as carrying with it evidence that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all of them living, though centuries had passed since their bodies had been deposited in Machpelah's cave. See Luke 20:38. It is very helpful to note that reference to the hand of the angel in vs. 35 and 38. It reminds us of Acts 11:21. Would that, in *our* service for God, we were always conscious of the co-operating hand of the Saviour!

The prophet referred to in v. 37 is, of course, our Lord, and the parallel between him and Moses is very apparent during our Lord's human ministry:—for meekness, for reference in all things to the sending of God, for the work they did, as negotiating the Law from Sinai and the Mount of Beatitudes. But the difference in their posthumous ministry is emphasized in Heb. 3:1-6.

19. A Martyr's Glorious Death.

Acts 7:47-60. Words like these could not be forgiven. The growing irritation of the audience seems to have extorted those burning remonstrances, and to have hastened the final scene. But the storm that burst around Christ's faithful confessor and first martyr could not disturb his serenity. His heart was fixed, trusting in God, Ps. 108:1. The peace of God garrisoned his heart and mind. At the moment when his foes were fiercest, the presence of Jesus, who had risen from sitting to standing, in order to encourage and welcome him, was most vital. It will always be even so. You will never know the completeness of

Christ's comradeship till you have weathered a storm in his company.

They were particular not to violate the sanctity of the Temple, but not so in respect to the pure temple of the young martyr's body. The dying Stephen did not forget the Lord's prayer for those who crucified him, and he followed his Master's steps in this also. Amid the murderous flight of stones, he slept as a tired child on his mother's breast; and from that hour his patience, gentleness, and strength became as pricking goads in the heart of Saul of Tarsus.

20. Fruits of the Scattered Seed.

Acts 8:1-13. Evidently Stephen was beloved outside the precincts of the Church, for it would seem that the devout men who lamented his early death and carried his poor body to its burial were godly Jews who had been attracted by his earnest character. In the furious persecution that ensued under the leadership of Saul, neither sex nor age was spared. According to the subsequent statement of the arch-persecutor, the disciples of Jesus were dragged before the magistrate, thrust into prison, exposed to cruel torture, and compelled to blaspheme his holy Name. During those terrible days scenes were enacted which were destined to fill the heart of the future Apostle with most poignant sorrow.

This persecution was overruled to scatter the Church, which had grown too prosperous and secure, and needed to be reminded of the Lord's injunction to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The light must be diffused; the salt must be scattered. How often God has to drive us by trouble to do what we ought to have done gladly and spontaneously! It was impossible to keep the deacons to the office of serving tables. Philip must needs go to Samaria, and that city welcomed what Jerusalem had refused. Here we enter upon the second circle of Acts 1:8.

21. Confirming New Believers.

Acts 8: 14-25. Simon attracted people to *himself;* he posed as a man of power and mystery. The gospel fixes our thoughts exclusively upon *Jesus.* We preach him as Lord, and ourselves as servants for his sake. Simon's faith was spurious; he believed *about* rather than *in* Christ. John was sent with Peter to bring the fire of Pentecost to the very locality where formerly he and his brother had suggested that they should call fire from heaven to destroy. See Luke 9:54. May we not learn from this mission that some are specially qualified to lead others into the enjoyment of pentecostal blessing? In this service Peter used the power of the keys entrusted to him by the Master; and we may all do likewise when we lead others forward to claim that which awaits them in Christ Jesus.

Simon saw what an additional source of influence would accrue to him if only he could exert the same powers, but he had no idea of the spiritual conditions on which alone they could be obtained. *Simony* is the name for the practice of making gain by means of religion, 1 Tim. 6:5. *Perhaps* in v. 22 does not indicate a doubt upon God's side, but upon Simon's side; —whether his treacherous heart would ever be able to conform to the divine conditions.

22. Winning a Traveler.

Acts 8:26-40. From the great city revival in Samaria Philip was led to the desert to minister to one seeking soul. It seems strange that God should be able to spare him from his busy and fruitful ministry in Samaria; but probably the comparative retirement was needed for soul and body after the strain of that successful campaign. How certain these Spirit-filled men were of the heavenly impulse! Every appearance suggested that this man of God was needed in the city, but the inner voice was the deciding factor, and his journey was so timed as to bring him in contact with a soul that was groping its way toward Christ.

The Bible is good as a traveling companion. Take it on your journeys. Read it as other men do their newspapers; not exclusively but boldly. There are many stories afloat of bullets being stopped by pocket Testaments; and it is certain that many a desperate thrust of the devil has been warded off by the Word of God being hidden in the heart and worn as a breastplate. Live in touch with God, and he will put you in touch with souls. This conversion of a son of Ham was a worthy fulfillment of Isa. 56:3-8.

23. Winning a Persecutor.

Acts 9:1-9. A year had passed since 8:3. "The Way" had become the accepted phrase for the infant Church and its presentation of the truth, 19:9; 22:4. It may refer to the course of life the Christians pursued, or to their method of getting right with God —not by the deeds of the Law, but by their faith in Christ, Rom. 10: 5-10. Compare with this narrative 26:13 and 22:6. Saul's companions saw the light and heard a noise, but did not see the Lord or distinguish what was said.

Mark how the Lord Jesus identifies himself with his suffering ones. Their sufferings are his, v. 5. To hurt them is to hurt him. The *pricks* are the ox-goad. The more the ox resists, the deeper the wound. Even from heaven the Master speaks in parables. Evidently for a long time—perhaps from the death of Stephen—the persecutor had been fighting against conviction. When God needs captains for his army, he not unseldom takes them from the ranks of the enemy. The foremost persecutor became the foremost leader of the Church. The conversion of Saul was due to the personal interposition of the living Christ. It was the pierced hand that arrested and apprehended him.

24. Opened Eyes.

Acts 9:10-22. How graciously God makes use of prepared souls as partners in the work of salvation! It

would have been easy for the risen Lord to have himself completed what he had begun; or he might have brought a Philip or an Apostle upon the scene. But instead of this he called a comparatively obscure man who was to give Saul the help and counsel he needed, Gal. 4:19. See to it that you are of such a temper that Jesus may commission you to heal the wounds with which he brings his predestined servants to the ground.

A little taper may be used to kindle a great light. Though not a great man Ananias was pre-eminently a good man, 22:12. He had his strong prepossessions, but laid them aside at the bidding of Christ. Take care not to entrench yourself too strongly in your prejudices. Be mobile to Christ's touch, while you are strong against all others. What a comfort v. 15 must have been to Paul in after-days! Perhaps the sweetest part of these terms of his commission was *unto me*. It was a noble act of faith for Ananias to call him *brother*. Yet if the Master accepted, the disciple could not refuse. Note that a new convert was bidden in those days to seek the pentecostal gift!

25. Welcomed as a Brother.

Acts 9:23-31. He who feeds on Scripture must wax strong. The new convert started at once to testify of the Saviour. We have no right to keep to ourselves the great treasures that we have discovered, but must copy the lepers of 2 Kings 7:9. He probably showed from a comparison between the predictions of the Old Testament and the facts of our Lord's life, that the key exactly fitted the wards of the ancient lock, and so proved its genuineness.

Those *many days* in v. 23 probably include the three years spent in Arabia, Gal. 1:17. It was as though Paul wanted time and solitude for quiet thought. We may suppose that he went to Sinai, and there amid the silences of the school where Moses had studied before him, he received of the Lord Jesus that which also he was commissioned to pass on to the Church. From

Arabia, he returned to Damascus; then happened vs. 24 and 25. Finally he came to Jerusalem, where he had the opportunity of comparing his teaching with that of the Apostles, Gal. 1:18-24. A vision led him to leave Jerusalem, 22:17-21. While at Tarsus, he probably founded the churches in Cilicia, 15:23, 41.

26. Strength and Life through Christ.

Acts 9:32-43. Peter was now free for a visit of apostolic inspection, of which the two incidents here preserved are the only record. Lydda was a village on the great plain, abutting on the seaboard. The effect of the miracle of healing wrought upon Æneas was profound. A general conversion of the agricultural population was the immediate result. They all turned to the Lord. The villagers had probably been prepared by the tidings of what had taken place, and a single spark sufficed to set the whole country in a blaze.

The little church at Joppa had sustained a serious loss in the death of one of its chief workers, a woman named Dorcas, vs. 36, 37. She is described as *a certain disciple.* She had learned of Jesus Christ the great lesson that the love of God implies ministry to others, and she gave herself to practice it by quiet, feminine handiwork, which she distributed among the desolate and friendless women of the town. Peter's prayer in the chamber of death was answered, and Dorcas was given back to her friends. Our Lord put his seal upon her work, and she has been crowned as the patron saint of women workers.

27. Guidance for Men Who Pray.

Acts 10:1-16. At this point the Church took a new departure, and the gospel broke over the walls of Jewish exclusiveness and was preached for the first time to pure-blooded Gentiles. Cæsarea, built by the great Herod, was practically a Roman city, and the official seat of the Roman government in Judæa. Cornelius was an officer of high rank, and it would seem naturally

of noble character. He had no sympathy with the religious fables and sensuous indulgence of his time, and was attracted to the Jewish faith, which stood alone in the world for pure and undefiled conceptions of God. He adopted some of its characteristic features;—its hours of prayer, its practice of fasting, and its almsgiving.

He had apparently set apart the whole of this memorable day for earnest inquiry as to the way of salvation, and as the sun was declining an angel brought the necessary indication of the steps that he should take. In the meanwhile God was about to prepare Peter to bring Cornelius into the perfect light. On the following day, as the messengers of Cornelius were nearing Joppa, the vision of a redeemed world from which Hebrew restrictions had vanished, opened to the Apostle a new and wider conception of God's purpose.

28. Jew and Gentile Meet.

Acts 10:17-33. It should be carefully noted that the mental impression which was produced by Peter's vision was corroborated by the fact of the knocking and inquiring group at Peter's door. This is God's invariable method. For us all, as we contemplate taking a new and important step in life, there are the urging of the Spirit, the impression or vision of duty, and the knock or appeal of outward circumstances.

Evidently Cornelius had gathered to his quarters in the barracks his kinsmen and a number of intimate friends, who were as eager as he to discover the will of God. They remained quietly waiting until the party from Joppa had completed their thirty-mile journey. Peter had taken the precaution of bringing with him six brethren, evidently with the expectation that the events of that day would not only create a new era, but would also be called into serious question.

The welcome that Cornelius gave was very significant. That a high-born Roman should prostrate him-

self before a Jewish evangelist was unprecedented, though it revealed the true reverence and humility of Cornelius's soul; but the noble simplicity of Peter's reply was also a revelation of the true greatness of the Apostle, and ought to have more obviously influenced his would-be successors.

29. Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:34-48. The address with which Peter answered the centurion's inquiry was largely a recapitulation of the great facts of gospel history. The ministry of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit was probably already familiar to his hearers. The story of the crucifixion was equally well-known. These things were not done in a corner. But the third division of the address, vs. 39-41, in which the Apostle told of the Resurrection and of our Lord's appearance to chosen witnesses, of whom he was one, was probably replete with new and startling tidings. Notice the implied invitation of v. 43 to them all to believe in Jesus, for the remission of sin.

The Holy Spirit fell upon the audience, as on the day of Pentecost, v. 44. There must have been that wonderful stirring and moving among the people which we have beheld, in a modified form, in modern audiences, when moved by the celestial wind, as a harvest field by the breeze. Peter never finished his sermon. It seemed as if the Holy Spirit put the Apostle aside, saying, "Thou hast spoken enough; leave the rest to me!"

30. Following a Plain Course.

Acts 11:1-18. It is very interesting here to find Peter on the defensive. We have always thought of him as masterful and strong, the born leader of men, whose authority was absolutely indisputable. But here we see him taken seriously to task by the mother Church, and compelled to show the grounds of his unprecedented action. Here also appears the first clear indication of the rift which was, in due course, to

develop in the Church, between the converted Jews, who insisted that Gentiles must become Jews before becoming Christians, and those of more liberal views, who began to understand that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed anything, but a new creature, Gal. 6:15, and faith working by love, Gal. 5:6. This division was the cause of Paul's embittered and life-long persecution.

But the first decision of those in the church in Jerusalem was a perfectly just one, v. 18. The facts compelled a favorable verdict upon Peter's action. They tacitly confessed that the seal of God's approval had been unmistakably affixed to his action, and that he had no alternative. When a man lives in union with the Spirit of God, crooked things become straight and rough places plain, Isa. 40:4.

31. Knitting Together the Church.

Acts 11: 19-30. The development of God's plan is still further disclosed in the events recorded in this section, which describe the same phenomenon of Gentile conversion, but in different circumstances. In this case, it was not an Apostle that was God's chosen instrument, but a few unknown and unrecognized disciples, who were fleeing north from persecution, and had reached the gay, volatile city of Antioch. The hand of the Lord was with them, as it certainly had been with Peter, and large numbers of converts were gathered into a church. In this instance, also, the mother church felt bound to make inquiry, so *they sent forth Barnabas*, v. 22.

Barnabas was a good man, and his unaffected piety enabled him to recognize at once that this movement was of God. All the signs of true conversion were present. He saw undoubted evidence of the grace of God, and pleaded with the new converts for tenacity and constancy. The secret of perseverance is in the phrase to *cleave unto the Lord*, v. 23. In addition to the other beautiful traits of his character, we must

PETER FREED BY THE ANGEL. Acts 12: 1, 3, 6-10.

From Painting by WILLIAM HILTON. Modern British Artist.

add the spirit of tender brotherhood that carried Barnabas to Tarsus to find Saul.

32. Loosened Bonds.

Acts 12: 1-12. This Herod was the grandson of Herod the Great. He courted the goodwill of the Jews, though he was dissolute, cruel, and unscrupulous. How wonderful that God can spare from his work men like James, whom it has taken him so long to train!—but doubtless other and higher service awaits them.

A quaternion numbered four: the total number of soldiers that guarded Peter, therefore, would be sixteen, exclusive of prison officials. But a praying household is stronger than the strongest precautions of human might.

God often delays his answers till the eve of our extremity; but Peter's sleep is typical of the quiet faith that can trust God absolutely, whether to live or die. When God bids us arise and obey, we must do so without considering the obstructions that confront us. It is *our* part to arise and gird ourselves; it is for *him* to cause the chains to fall off and the iron gates to open. What are iron gates to him who cleft a path through the Red Sea! The angel guides us *supernaturally*, only so long as we are dazed and unable to form a judgment for ourselves. As soon as we are able to consider a matter, he leaves us to make use of our *God-given faculties.*

33. Beyond Their Faith.

Acts 12:13-25. Mark's mother was evidently a woman of property, as her house was large enough to receive the many who felt that prayer was the key to open Peter's prison. Rhoda is Rose. Her portrait has charmed every generation. It is so lifelike and natural. How good for every servant-maid to love the devotional meeting, and to be welcomed to it! Christianity had introduced a new spirit into the world. How often our deliverances seem too good to be true!

These praying friends of Peter would not believe the maid, though she told them that their prayers were answered. This proves that while their faith was very imperfect, their request was granted. When we believe not, God remains faithful; he cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. 2:13. The *James* mentioned in v. 17 was the brother of our Lord, and afterward head of the church in Jerusalem, 15:13. See Jas. 1:1.

What a contrast between Peter's deliverance and Herod's death! Be not afraid of the reproach of men, for "the moth shall eat them up like a garment," Isa. 51:8. During these happenings Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem, and in after years their minds must often have reverted to them. Probably Paul's remembrance of this incident inspired his constant request for prayer in his own behalf, Eph. 6:18-20.

(*The questions on Sections 1-33, to be found on pp. 64, 65, will serve as a review at this point.*)

34. Beginning a Missionary Campaign.

Acts 13:1-12. This is one of the greatest chapters in the New Testament, making a new departure in the ministry of the gospel, which henceforth begins to pass out to the uttermost part of the earth, Acts 1:8. It is likely that the mother church at Jerusalem was too conservative to lend herself to the pressure of the Holy Spirit, urging to world-wide evangelization, and that he had to employ the more mobile church at Antioch, which was more susceptible to the passion for humanity, since it stood out on the edge of the great heathen world, like a lighthouse on the shore of a desolate sea.

This momentous prayer meeting had apparently been convened to discover the Lord's will as to further developments. As the names indicate, it was composed largely of Hebrew Christians. Note that the Holy Spirit speaks with authority as Christ's Vicegerent, Acts 2:33. Modern missions are his work and he selects his own agents. We should ever seek to

co-operate with him in discovering and setting apart chosen men and women for his work.

35. The Saviour According to Promise.

Acts 13: 13-24. It was very natural that the missionary party should sail for Cyprus, partly because it was the first and nearest outpost of the great heathen world that lay to the west, and partly because Barnabas was a native of the island and had owned land there, which he had sold for the benefit of his poorer brethren in the church, Acts 4:36.

In visiting a new city, it was the custom of the Apostles to go first to the Jewish synagogue, where such was to be found. "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," was the divine order, Rom. 2:10. The journey from Cyprus to the mainland was easily made; but the journey up to this inland city of Antioch was very perilous, 2 Cor. 11:26.

Verse 16 gives us the Apostle's favorite attitude, Acts 21:40; 26:1. *Ye that fear God,* referred to the Gentile proselytes. This first address contained the seed-thoughts of the Apostle's ministry. He loved to show that the gospel was the white flower that grew on the ancient stock of Judaism. Whatever his starting point, he was sure to come, by a direct path, to Jesus Christ. Observe throughout how Paul attributes all of the great events and movements of history to the direction and agency of God. God chose the fathers; God gave Saul; God brought unto Israel a Saviour.

36. Condemned by Men but Raised by God.

Acts 13:25-37. For Paul the Resurrection was always the keystone of faith. He had taken particular care to assure himself of the reality of that foundation fact. In 1 Cor. 15 he sets forth at length the testimony culminating in his own experience, on which he rested his belief. He had been allowed to see that blessed one and hear the word from his mouth. He quotes Ps.

2:7, Isa. 55:3, and Ps. 16:10. He makes unexpected use of the first of these quotations, teaching that it was fulfilled in the Resurrection. This sheds new light on death. It is not death but birth; not an ending but a beginning. Our Lord was the first-born from the dead. *We* say that a saint has *died; angels* say that he has been *born.*

Notice that great word about David, v. 36. He served God's counsel, or purpose, in his own generation. That should be the supreme objective of our lives. Not to get on, or to make money, or to please ourselves, but to serve the will of God who sent us forth.

37. Jews Reject, Gentiles Accept, the Gospel.

Acts 13: 38-52. The doctrine of justification by faith, so closely associated with the work of Paul, is here stated for the first time. In Jesus there is forgiveness. For those who trust in him past sins are absolutely put away, never to be named again, never to be brought up at any future judgment day. Our record is as clear as the sand which has been swept smooth by the ocean waves. We are not only forgiven, but justified. We are treated as though we had never sinned, and *are justified from all things.* It is a present fact. You may not *feel* justified or forgiven, but if you are trusting in Jesus, you *are* at this moment as certainly and as fully justified as have been the saints in heaven.

Pride, as well as jealousy of the Gentiles who were crowding into the fold, stirred the Jews to antagonism, but they could not eradicate the seed which had been so profusely scattered. Large numbers believed, and as they experienced salvation in Christ, they discovered that they were in line with an eternal purpose. This is the meaning of *ordained* in v. 48. If with such slight opportunities, the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, v. 52, should *we* not possess the same experience?

38. Varying Treatment of the Message.

Acts 14: 1-13. From Antioch the Apostles passed to Iconium, the capital of Lycaonia. It is most illuminating to note the source of their success: *The Lord . . . bore witness unto the word of his grace.* We must not expect success if that divine witness is absent. There is nothing more vital than this. The secret of joyful and successful service is the consciousness that, in every sermon and address, there is an unseen fellow-worker who is listening to each sentence and punctuating with his strong affirmation each utterance which magnifies the grace of God.

Lystra was situated in the highlands, amid a wild, mountainous country. In Paul's audience here he saw a cripple who had faith to be healed, v. 9. What quick insight God gives the soul that lives in fellowship with him! There was an old tradition that the gods had frequented this very region. Jupiter, the father of the gods, was the guardian deity of Lystra. There was, accordingly, an especial reason for the excitement among these simple and untutored folk. Man has ever longed for a daysman, and believed that there might be commerce between heaven and earth. Oh, that *we* were as quick to worship and adore the Son of God!

39. Establishing the New Believers.

Acts 14:14-28. In Paul's address we have distinct anticipations of the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. How fickle a mob is! Now, enthusiastic loyalty; again, disappointment and rejection. Today, "Hosanna"; tomorrow, "Crucify." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

It has been supposed by some that the trance of 2 Cor. 12 took place at the time of Paul's stoning in Lystra. It must have been sorrow indeed to awaken from such a vision to the suffering of his battered body. But that scene, no doubt, gave him the love and devotion of the young Timothy and his mother and

grandmother. See Acts 16:1, 2. On Paul's next visit to Lystra, this son, whom he had begotten in the sore anguish of that hour, was to become his devoted attendant.

In spite of the treatment Paul had received, he returned to the city, v. 21. Back to the stones! Naught could stay his ardent spirit, if only disciples were to be won or confirmed in their faith for the Master, v. 22. Everywhere these intrepid missionaries found the blood-stained track of the Cross, but they filled up to the brim the measure of their opportunity. This will be possible for us all only when we are such that God can co-operate with us as our fellow-worker and *open the door.*

40. One Way of Salvation for All.

Acts 15:1-11. Paul and Barnabas were quietly resting in Antioch after their arduous toils, when these persons from Jerusalem stealthily commenced to undermine their influence. They contended that the way from paganism to Christ must be through Moses. They especially insisted that Gentiles must become Jews by submitting to the initial rite of Judaism. This insidious teaching followed Paul throughout his life, and extracted from him many of the noble arguments and appeals of his epistles. We can easily understand the vehemence with which he protested.

Finally it was determined to submit the question to the judgment of the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The journey thither was a triumphal progress. The story of the seal that God had placed on all the labors of the two missionaries not only filled all hearts with joy, but was the conclusive answer to the Judaizing teachers who were the cause of all the trouble. The first great address at the solemn conclave was by Peter, who quoted his own experience at the house of Cornelius to prove that God at least made no difference between Jew and Gentile. Notice his statement that the believing heart is cleansed by receiving the Holy Spirit, v. 11.

41. A Generous Conclusion.

Acts 15:12-21. When their turn came to speak, Paul and Barnabas contented themselves with emphasizing the signs and wonders by which God had set his seal on their words and methods. Would he have done so if they had followed a wrong course? Notice the two prepositions that they used in describing their work. They first told of what God had done in co-operation *with* them and then of what he had done *through* or *by* them, Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12. Consider also that remarkable phrase about God bearing witness, v. 8. See also Acts 14:3 and Heb. 2: 1-4.

James had a prominent position in the Jerusalem church, because he was the Lord's brother and a man of remarkable holiness and prayerfulness. He laid emphasis on the divine program, which moved forward from Jew to Gentile, from the rebuilding of the ruined Tabernacle of David to the seeking of the Lord by the residue of men. The implication was that though Jehovah dwelt in a special manner with his Chosen People, yet the Gentiles would come seeking him *directly* and without becoming incorporated with the Jews.

42. "Confirming the Churches."

Acts 15:22-41. This letter was a noble document and fitted for its immediate purpose, but it does not apply directly to us, as the circumstances which called it forth have long since passed away. It was explicit in denying that the rite of circumcision was needful for salvation. It bore ample testimony to the character and work of the two great missionaries whose action had been impugned. It denounced the false teachers whose intrusion had broken the peace of the Church, and laid down the principles which had been embodied in James's speech. Notice the conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the persons who issued this letter, v. 28. Here is convincing proof that the Spirit of God is a person; that he presides in the Church; and that he is

willing to become our guide and teacher whenever we are perplexed.

The arrival of Judas and Silas, attesting by their presence the importance that the mother church attached to the question at issue, and the reading of the letter, brought great relief to the believers at Antioch, and a blessed season of teaching and preaching ensued.

It is unpleasant to see the contention between the two leaders over John Mark, but God overruled it for good and Paul could later write to Timothy, "Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering," 2 Tim. 4:11, R.V.

43. Guided to New Fields.

Acts 16:1-13. Paul had a wonderful influence over young men. Timothy, Titus, and Mark bore his impress. When circumcision was insisted upon, as in the previous chapter, no one opposed it more stoutly than Paul; when it conciliated Jewish prejudice, he was quite willing to concede it, since in itself it was a matter of perfect indifference. As the stoning of Stephen was the first step toward winning Paul, so his own stoning at Lystra on the former occasion, as we have noted, probably gave him Timothy.

Our path through life will often be indicated by the fact that the doors which lead off the straight track are barred and bolted, so that we have no option save to go on. Paul was blocked first on the left, that he should not go into the province of Asia; then on the right, that he should not go into Bithynia. Finally he reached Troas, and stood face to face with the ocean that lay between him and Europe.

Here he had a vision which made a deep impression upon him. He saw a man of Macedonia standing in an attitude of entreaty and saying, *Come over into Macedonia and help us.* Note that word, *concluding*, v. 10. God often leaves us to infer our course. He does not ignore his own great gift of reason.

44. Welcomed; Attested; Imprisoned.

Acts 16:14-24. This was an epoch-making moment, but how quietly it is recorded. There was no heralding of the gospel which was to transform Europe. The need for it was unspoken and unfelt. It stole in like the dawn.

Paul's first experiences in Europe were not promising. In most cities there was a Jewish synagogue; but here only a small group of pious women in an arbor by the riverside. Let none despise the day of small things. What a contrast between Lydia, who had come over from Asia Minor, and employed a number of hands in the dyeing trade, and the poor girl who was possessed by the demon! Yet each of them recognized the divine ministry of the newly arrived messengers. What a contrast, also, between the gradual response of Lydia's heart in the revelation of the risen Christ, to whom it opened as a flower to the sun, and the sudden awakening of the jailor!

When Christ touches the pockets of worldly men, he arouses their direct opposition. The *world* is troubled when it loses its gains; the *saints* are troubled when they see Christ's property being injured! See v. 18.

45. Salvation in the Jail.

Acts 16: 25-40. Some, as we have seen, are converted by the gentle opening of the heart; others amid the convulsions of the storm. The first knowledge of salvation may have reached the heart of the jailer through the saving of the possessed girl, v. 17. If only the heart is right with Christ, it can sing in the darkest night; and the impression of those holy songs must have wrought still further upon the conscience of this rough Roman official, who had treated his prisoners with uncommon severity, v. 24. *The inner prison!* Perhaps some of our readers have been in it! They have come to an end of themselves and their feet are fastened!

But God has his own way of deliverance and never

forsakes his own. Art thou in the stocks today? Then pray and sing praises! Choose, for instance, Ps. 103. God will be thy very present help. Thou shalt win thy jailer, and become a monument of God's saving mercy. There is no course for the convicted sinner but to trust in the salvation wrought upon the Cross; or still better, in Him who wrought it.

Paul was perfectly justified in insisting upon his civil rights when he had the opportunity, v. 37. It made the way easier for his new converts.

46. Persecution Spreads the Truth.

Acts 17:1-12. Thessalonica. Slowly Paul made his way among the great cities of Greece. He was sowing seeds of which others would reap the harvest. His one theme was the *risen Lord,* whether amid the less or the more cultivated, vs. 3, 31. This is surely the true method of world evangelization;—not to argue but to proclaim the glorious personality of our risen Lord. Notice the distinction in v. 3 between the human name, Jesus, and the royal name, Christ. As Jesus, our Lord lived, ministered, and died; as Christ, he was raised from the dead, and as such he is the crowned King of men, v. 7. However loyal we may be to the civil government, our first allegiance is to *another king,* v. 7.

Beroea. True nobility consists in being open to any new truth that God may reveal to us from his Word. The one test of truth is Scripture as interpreted to the pure heart by the Holy Spirit; but we should examine the Scriptures *daily* as the Berœans did. It is not to be wondered at that many believed. If only our people would love the Bible, saturating their minds with it and teaching it to their children, what different results would follow the preaching of the gospel!

47. Stirred by Idolatry.

Acts 17: 13-21. From the first, the gospel was baptized in the fire of persecution. How unutterable the loneliness and sorrow of the Apostle as he reached

Athens! Did doubt ever enter his mind as to whether he was on the appointed track? If it did, he at once dismissed it. His motto was to forget the things behind. When, in dependence upon God, you have once taken a path, dare to believe it is right, whatever appearances there are to the contrary.

One purpose consumed the Apostle. *One thing I do,* was the thread on which the many beads of his experiences were strung. Persecuted and rejected today, he is at his favorite work tomorrow. How different this intense earnestness from the trifling of the so-called philosophers of Athens! The Epicurean made the pursuit of pleasure the main object of life. The Stoic, on the other hand, believed in the stern repression of nature. All Greece was absorbed in the cultivation of art, architecture, eloquence, and intellectual brilliance. But here, as everywhere, Paul had but one message—Jesus and the Resurrection. Oh, to be pressed in spirit, as he was, till our earnestness should compel our opponents to give us a serious hearing!

48. The One Living and True God.

Acts 17:22-34. The gospel preacher must avail himself of any circumstance in his surroundings that will enable him to arrest the attention of his audience. He must meet them where they are and take them with him to realms of thought with which they are not familiar. Paul was wise to begin with that altar *to the unknown god.*

Around them stood the most exquisite temples ever reared by human genius, but these were not the home of God. He seeks the lowly and contrite heart, not of the Jew alone, but wherever man is found, and on whatever intellectual plane. Men, the world over, are brothers;—"he hath made of one blood all nations." The arrangements of divine providence have been contrived to lead men to God. If they feel after him with reverence and true desire, he will be found of them. All men are his offspring, but only those who receive

the Son of God into their hearts become really sons. Repentance is the act of the will, and therefore it may be commanded. God can overlook much that is hurtful and evil, because he loves the world and deals with men according to their light; and we may rejoice therefore that he will judge mankind by "the Man."

49. A Great Ministry in a Great City.

Acts 18:1-17. Paul tells us, in 1 Cor. 2:1-4, that he entered Corinth with fear and trembling and made no effort to attract by human wisdom or eloquence. From the first he preached "Christ and him crucified."

Similarity in trade discovered friends who were to be of the utmost assistance; nothing in our life may be attributed to chance. Sitting at their common toils, he won them for Christ.

Constrained in spirit, v. 5, R.V. The heart of the Apostle yearned with irrepressible desire. He was weary of forbearing. God's word was as a fire in his bones. The guilty city appealed to him and tugged at his heartstrings. So Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Do *we* participate in this soul anguish? Are *our* hands free of the blood of men? Are *we* prepared to suffer if only we may save others?

Gallio was a typical man of the world, intent upon matters of law and order, philosophical and cultured. But when questions of religion were in debate, he was absolutely indifferent. How vast the contrast between him and Paul!

50. New Helpers in the Gospel.

Acts 18: 18-28. In unimportant matters Paul was still amenable to Hebrew customs and rites, v. 18. Probably he desired to conciliate his Judaizing opponents so far as he could without surrendering vital principles. He took his new-found friends with him to Ephesus. Though none of them realized it, there was important work awaiting them in that mighty city. The plans of Apostles, and of ordinary travelers as

well, must be subordinated to the divine will. See 1 Cor. 4:19; Jas. 4:15.

Apollos combined the eloquence of the Greek with the religious instinct of the Jew. A student from the great university at Alexandria, a convert to the gospel, deeply conversant with the Old Testament, gifted with marvelous eloquence, he was a strong ally of the Christian forces of his age. But he needed to know of the death, resurrection, and ascended power of Christ, and to experience the Pentecostal gift. Into all these he was led by Aquila and Priscilla. How wonderful is that holy wisdom which the Spirit of God gives to simple and humble believers, so that they can become teachers of men who are intellectually their superiors!

51. The Holy Spirit Working in Ephesus.

Acts 19:1-12. Paul had planted good seed at Corinth, and Apollos, in turn, had watered it, 1 Cor. 3:6. Large numbers became his devoted followers. This, however, excited no jealousy in Paul. Apollos and he were only instruments through whom God was pleased to work.

Meanwhile Paul had a ministry to fulfill in Ephesus. The twelve men mentioned had known only so much of the truth as had been revealed to the Baptist. They had felt the need of repentance and had heard of Christ as the Lamb of God; but of his resurrection and ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit they were ignorant. Paul at once fixed on this lack as the source of their impotence. He seemed to say, "If you men had received the baptism of the Spirit, you would move this city."

It was wise on Paul's part to remove the disciples and his work to their own premises, which soon became famous throughout the city and indeed throughout the adjacent country. People who had come in to worship at the shrine of Diana gave themselves to Christ, and the Christian faith became disseminated through the province, Ephesus itself being mightily moved.

52. The Power of Jesus' Name.

Acts 19:13-29. Where God's spirit is mightily at work, Satan is not far away. Here the enemy's emissaries were mean enough to use the name of Jesus to get themselves a few more shekels. But the name is useless apart from the living power of the Spirit. It is terrible when the very demons flout those who profess religion. *Who are ye?* meant, "You do not count." The demons knew Christ as the Holy One of God and Paul as his representative, but these exorcist Jews were hollow as sounding brass. Cast into the balances, they were altogether lighter than vanity, Ps. 62:9.

The outcome of all this was a mighty revival. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and a searching work of grace led to the confession of sin and the cleansing of heart and life in many who had followed vain superstitions.

So deep was the work of God in that great city of Ephesus that the trade in charms and amulets, sold in the neighborhood of the temple, began to fall off. The crowd of worshippers in Diana's temple was also perceptibly less. People who came in from the seaboard would find their way to the Apostle, who preached the gospel with a power that could not be withstood. Regenerated souls therefore, in turn, carried the gospel throughout the whole region.

53. The Lawlessness of Selfish Greed.

Acts 19:30-41. The theater of Ephesus still stands, and the writer of these words has spoken in its mighty enclosure, from the very spot where this town clerk—the model of officialism—must have stood to address and calm the frenzied crowd. Paul never knew the fear of man, and was with difficulty prevented from endangering his life in his desire to turn the occasion to account. He probably refers to this incident when he says that he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, 1 Cor. 15:32. But he could have done no good in the

THE THEATER, EPHESUS.

From a Photograph.

face of such a turmoil. Be valorous, Christian soldiers, but be discreet! Do not throw yourselves from the mountain brow unless God clearly calls for it.

It is well to bear this scene in mind when the Apostle tells us of a "peace that passeth understanding" which stands sentry over heart and mind. His was not the sequestered life of a religious recluse; he was continually battling his way through a stormy sea. But it is in the floods of great waters that we learn what our Lord can be. Dying outwardly and in human estimation, yet we live, 2 Cor. 4:16; the earthern vessel chipped and broken, but the heavenly treasure unimpaired, 2 Cor. 4:7.

54. A Messenger of Truth and Life.

Acts 20:1-12. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians should be read with the introductory verses of this chapter, as it reveals the Apostle's inner mind at this time. He seems to have been less impressed with the imminent peril from which he had been rescued, and more solicitous as to the condition of the church at Corinth, to which he had addressed his first Epistle during the early days of his Ephesian ministry.

Into how small a compass, v. 3, the evangelist crowds the three months' ministry in Greece, where he visited the scenes of his memorable first journey. In a few lines he enumerates the companions of his return journey, and before we are well aware we are back again in Troas and on our way to Jerusalem.

Notice that reference to the breaking of bread on the first day of the week, v. 7. This proves that the primitive Church was adopting the first day of the week for its characteristic meal; and as the Gentile element became predominant, it is easy to see how gradually and inevitably Sunday superseded Saturday as the rest day. See also Col. 2:16. It is possible that Eutychus was not already dead, although believed to be so. In that case, Paul's loving embrace and prayer restored him from the swoon that might easily have

become death. Can we not imagine the theme of that talk which lasted till dawn!

55. A Parting Message.

Acts 20:13-27. The vessel had to stop at Miletus and Paul sent word to the Ephesian elders, urging them to come and see him. He spent the day in their company, and before parting delivered this pathetic and helpful address. There are many incidental touches revealing the nature of his work in the great city, of which there is little or no mention elsewhere in the Acts. For instance, we were not aware of his tears and trials through the opposition of the Jews, v. 19, nor of the labors of his toil-worn hands, v. 34. We hardly realized that his ministry was not simply the public proclamation of the gospel, but a visitation from house to house as well, v. 20.

The Greek word in vs. 20 and 27 for *kept back* and *shunned* is a nautical word which literally means "reefed up." It was so natural for Paul to use a nautical word which he must have been hearing every day. But notice how this heroic soul alludes to the lightness with which he held comfort and life, if only he might serve his Master perfectly, and fulfill in full measure his opportunities. How Paul loved that great word *grace!* It was his perpetual theme, and as we come to know ourselves better, and consider how little we have deserved of God, we also shall have but one theme. We are debtors to the sovereign grace of God, and have nothing to pay.

56. Commended to God.

Acts 20: 28-38. Notice the change of the Revised Version in v. 28. The elder, whether presbyter or bishop, is not put *over* the flock; he is *in* it like the rest, needing redemption through the same precious blood. Notice also that remarkable expression, *the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,* v. 28. It clearly indicates Paul's view of the deity of our Lord.

The prediction of v. 30 was but too soon fulfilled, 1 Tim. 1: 19, 20. Tears are thrice mentioned in this short passage: tears of suffering, v. 19; of pastoral anxiety, v. 31; and of personal affection, v. 37.

The master builder was withdrawn before the edifice was completed, but he knew that God would continue, through other hands, to complete what he had begun, v. 32. We are in the company of God's heirs. Let us meditate on the word of his grace, as fellow-heirs with Christ and all his saints; let us enter into possession of our inheritance. In v. 35 we have the only saying of our Lord in the New Testament which is not preserved in the Gospels. The blessedness applies to our Lord as well as to ourselves. Let us not think that he is tired of our requests. Every time we ask for anything that he can give us, we add to *his* blessedness, as well as to our own.

57. Ready To Die for His Lord.

Acts 21:1-14. The vessel coasted along Asia Minor, sighted Cyprus, sailed to the south of it, and so finally to Tyre. There the disciples were poor and obscure, and it took searching to find them; but they were very warm-hearted, and the whole community, including the children, who never forgot that incident, accompanied Paul to his ship. As they neared the vessel they knelt on the shore to pray together, and so parted.

The journey from Ptolemais (Acre) to Cæsarea lay along the edge of the plain of Sharon, at the season bright with the flowers of spring. The days Paul spent at Cæsarea were the last happy days of freedom that he was to enjoy for two or three years. What blessed intercourse Paul and Philip must have had! They had both known Stephen. Agabus joined the happy party, with prophecies of peril ahead, but these only served to bring out the magnificant courage of the Apostle. His purpose was inflexible. An unseen hand was beckoning; a voice which only he could hear was calling. He had no doubt as to God's purpose, and went

straight forward; though he was not insensible to the love and sympathy of friends.

58. Binding Together the Church.

Acts 21:15-26. Mnason was an *early* disciple. He could remember the first days of the Church's story. It was good for Paul to have the society and care of this good man during those last troublous days. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the Judaizing elements in the Church, the splendid labors of the Apostle were estimated at their true worth, and he was gladly welcomed by the brethren at Jerusalem. Note how careful he was to attribute all to God. Paul was only the instrument through whom the Almighty wrought for the glory of Jesus, v. 19.

The action here described, which was strongly recommended by the leaders of the Church, seems at variance with what Paul so clearly states in his Epistle to the Galatians, 2:3-5; and perhaps it would have been a wiser and stronger policy for him to have remained in quiet obscurity till the feast was over. But we must remember the deep coloring which the proximity of the Temple gave to church life at Jerusalem, and Paul was willing to be guided by men like James, in whose judgment he had full confidence. In addition, he was always willing to yield in cases which did not concern principle. He acquiesced in such matters for the sake of charity, so that he gladly became as a Jew to Jews, that he might save the Jews, 1 Cor. 9:20.

59. Facing a Bigoted Mob.

Acts 21:27-40. Four days passed and there seemed a hope that, as the number of pilgrims grew less, Paul might escape recognition till his vow was fulfilled. In fulfilling it he was required to live with four paupers in a chamber of the Temple, to pay for sixteen sacrificial animals and the accompanying meat offerings on their behalf, and to stand with them while the priest offered lambs and rams on their behalf.

But as the ceremonies were approaching completion, he was recognized by Jews from Ephesus and other cities of Asia—perhaps Alexander the coppersmith was one of them—and a cry of hatred and horror was raised. They had seen the Ephesian Trophimus walking with him in the streets of Jerusalem, and supposed that Paul had taken him into the holy precincts. The punishment for that crime was death. They therefore seized him and forced him through the Beautiful Gate and down the fifteen steps, that they might kill him outside the Temple. This outburst attracted the notice of the Roman garrison in the neighborboring Castle of Antonia, and Lysias with his soldiers forced his way through the throng, rescued Paul from his would-be murderers, and bore him beyond their reach. God had other work for the Apostle yet to do.

60. How His Life Was Changed.

Acts 22:1-16. What a sermon Paul preached! His pulpit, the steps that ascended from the Temple level to the Castle of Antonia. His audience, the frenzied crowds who filled the court below him, but who were calmed to silence as they heard the venerable Hebrew speech, which was unintelligible to the Romans around them. His text, the real and personal interposition of the living Christ to arrest his course of persecution and convert him. Here was a fact, which to the Apostle was the greatest of all facts, namely, that he had seen Jesus Christ, and had been transformed by what he had seen and heard. No light thing could have revolutionized his life. His zeal for the Old Covenant and his persecution of the Christian sect were guarantees of his anti-Christian bias. He was not shallow or fickle, or likely to be moved by anything less than an imperative revelation.

We must obey a step at a time. God says much to us directly, but he loves to employ servants like Ananias, who live in immediate touch with him. Paul never forgot that salutation, *Brother.* Be very careful how

you treat young converts; they need the kindest and most sympathetic handling as they step out into their new life.

We are chosen of God for three things: to know his will; to see him; and to hear his voice, v. 14.

61. Saved for Further Service.

Acts 22:17-30. To the story of his conversion, as given in Acts 9, the Apostle here adds a detailed account of that memorable interview in the Temple, when he questioned the advisability of the Lord's command that he should leave Jerusalem, and received his final and irrevocable commission to go to the Gentiles. It is a great privilege to be permitted to overhear this dialogue! How close and intimate is the disciple's relationship with his Lord! God allowed Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah to reason with him. He does not crush down our intelligence. It is his own word, "Come, let us reason together." But there is a point beyond which we may not go, when we must accept without question the final instructions of our Captain.

A free-born Roman was Paul. More than once he had asserted his rights as a Roman citizen, as at Philippi. There are various social and political advantages which we can turn to account in our service of the gospel, but they cannot carry us very far, and ultimately we are better off if we step out upon the unwonted waters, simply because Jesus says, *Come!*

62. Dividing His Persecutors.

Acts 23:1-11. The behavior of the judge was quite unworthy of his office, but Paul's epithet cannot be defended. The best of men are but men at the best. Paul was thrown off his guard by an insult which touched him to the quick; but nothing could have been finer than the grace and frankness with which he acknowledged his error. The adroit way in which Paul divided the Council probably saved the situation. If the body had been united, Lysias would doubtless have

handed Paul over to them to deal with. But the fiery hatred that broke out gave the chief captain grave concern for the safety of this man with citizen-rights.

How timely and precious was the Saviour's revelation on the following night! As Paul's heart was sinking amid the solitude of his cell, and he was beginning to think that perhaps the predictions of Agabus and others were about to be fulfilled, he suddenly became aware of the presence of his Lord. Do not trust in your own understanding; let your Master steer your course; and remember that in the darkest hour, as in the brightest, he is beside you. There will be made to you, at "the fourth watch of the night," revelations which will reassure your weary and despairing soul that you are not alone.

63. Would-Be Murderers Baffled.

Acts 23:12-24. The Lord had told his servant that he was needed in Rome, but the conspirators said that he should not leave Jerusalem. There is only one conclusion when such a collision occurs—God's word must stand to the discomfiture of those who have sworn that they will neither eat nor drink till they have perpetrated their plan to the contrary.

These high ecclesiastics fell in with an infamous plot. What will not unscrupulous men do under cover of religion! It is a pleasing trait that the Roman officer took Paul's nephew by the hand and led him aside for a private audience. How proudly would the boy recount the whole story to his mother, when he emerged from those grim walls. At nine o'clock that night there was a clattering of horses' hoofs as seventy horsemen and two hundred soldiers went through the stone-paved streets on their way to Cæsarea. Already Paul had begun his journey to Rome. Often afterward, when it seemed as though his life would be forfeited, he must have stayed on the Master's words, *So must thou bear witness also at Rome.* What a life-buoy that promise was! And if God had saved him from the mob

at Jerusalem and given him the friendship of Lysias, what could God not do for him in the future!

64. Sent to a Roman Tribunal.

Acts 23:25-35. Antipatris was forty-two miles from Jerusalem. The escort and their prisoner made the forced march in a night. Next day the legionaries marched back to Jerusalem while the mounted soldiers rode forward to Cæsarea, which was twenty-six miles farther on. The Apostle therefore entered Cæsarea in a guise different from that in which he had left it, Acts 21:16. Philip and the other Christians must have been startled to see how soon their forebodings were fulfilled as the great missionary, from whom they had parted with so many tears, rode through the streets surrounded by soldiers.

When Felix read the letter which Lysias had sent explaining the case, he handed Paul over to a soldier to be kept in one of the guard-rooms of the old palace which now formed the stately residence of the governors of Judæa. What mingled feelings must have filled that lion heart, as he realized that, while Rome had him in her power, all the artifice of his bitter foes would now be powerless to do him bodily harm. The psalms which he had sung at Philippi would come to mind with added force as he strengthened his soul in God.

65. Truth against Slander.

Acts 24:1-16. Paul was always on the lookout for the one ray of light in murky skies. He found a reason for counting himself happy in this dark hour, v. 10. He held himself with great dignity. He remembered that he was always God's ambassador, representing the court of heaven amid the perverse courts of human government. As for the charge of sedition, he challenged his adversaries to prove it. He pointed out that as the nation was already divided into Pharisees and Sadducees, they could hardly find fault with him for belonging to a third sect

—that of the Nazarenes. After the way which they called a sect, v. 14, R.V., he worshipped God, but he had never stirred up strife in temple or synagogue. He protested that it had been the aim of his life to keep a conscience void of offense toward God and man.

In Acts 23:1 he had made a similar statement. Well would it be for us if only we would devote a few minutes at the close of each day to discover whether our conscience accused us of failure in heart, thought, or behavior. The Holy Spirit pleads in the court of conscience. We would be kept from many a fall, if we would be more careful to watch against the little rifts.

66. A Trembling but Venal Judge.

Acts 24:17-27. The case had broken down. Paul's statement of faith and the absence of confirmatory evidence directly contradicted the only charge against him. Felix dared not hand over Paul as guilty, and he was equally unwilling to offend the high priest's party; so he postponed his decision. In the meantime Paul's custody was not to be severe. His friends might freely see him, and the long hours were doubtless lightened by visits from Luke and Aristarchus, Philip the evangelist, and other members of the local Christian community.

At first the governor was prepossessed in Paul's favor. He had some intimate knowledge concerning the tenets of the early Church, v. 22. He had studied it as an intellectual system, and was interested to have opportunity for conversation with its foremost exponent. But his illicit union with Drusilla, whose husband was living, and his hope to receive a bribe from Paul's friends, made him obtuse and dead to the claims of Christ. Paul, on the other hand, seemed oblivious to any thought of himself or of his dependence on the governor's whim, and used his one opportunity in seeking the salvation of this weak and sordid soul. It was in vain. Felix was anchored to a mudbank and would not avail himself of the rising tides of life about him.

67. Granting Appeal to Caesar.

Acts 25:1-12. How inveterately must these Jews have hated Paul, when after two years they still thirsted for his blood! It would never have done for the trial to be transferred to Jerusalem, as the Jews had requested. If Paul had been brought thither, many plots might have been set on foot for the purpose of ending his life, especially if Festus proved as amenable to a bribe as had his predecessor. Festus was quite prepared to humor the Jews by granting such a transference, and there was no way of averting it other than Paul's availing himself of his right as a Roman citizen to be tried by the emperor himself.

The appeal was a great surprise. Festus himself was probably annoyed. It would not be agreeable to him to have his jurisdiction superseded on this the first occasion of holding a public inquiry. But there was no question that the appeal was admissible, and Festus had therefore no alternative. How strangely God was fulfilling his own word, *So must thou bear witness also at Rome!* Paul had always desired to visit the imperial city, to bear thither the message of the Cross; but he never expected to go under the safeguard of Roman soldiers and at Roman expense. "Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill" God fulfills his purposes.

68. Seeking Charges against His Prisoner.

Acts 25:13-27. Mark the difference with which these two men regarded our Lord. To the one, he was the supreme object of his affection and his life; to the other, he was "one Jesus." Notice also that Paul had made clear his belief that Jesus was alive. Evidently the risen Christ had been the burden of Paul's preaching. Even Festus had come to understand that, although he would not accept it as true.

The Apostle's audience on the morrow was the most dignified and influential that he had addressed up to this point. As the Lord told Ananias that Saul had

been chosen to bear his name before Gentiles and kings and the Children of Israel, so it came to pass. See Acts 9:15. There is no doubt that Paul was lifted far above the thought or fear of man by the consciousness that the Lord was standing by to strengthen him, so that through him the gospel might be fully known. Let us view every circumstance in our experience as the lamp-stand on which to place the lamp of testimony. It is a good thing to ask, "How far will this promote my Lord's business?"

69. Paul Permitted To Speak for Himself.

Acts 26:1-11. Though Paul's defense before Agrippa is in substance the same as that from the castle stairs at Jerusalem, it differs in the extended description of the remarkable change which had passed over his life in consequence of the direct interposition of Jesus Christ. And in the opening paragraph he lays great stress on his determined opposition to the doctrine of Christ, as a proof that his conversion was trustworthy evidence.

Stretching out his hand, the Apostle began by congratulating himself on the opportunity of laying his case before the great-grandson of Herod the Great, whose elaborate training in all matters of the Jewish religion made him unusually competent to deal with the matters in debate. He asked why it should be so hard to credit the attested fact of the Lord's resurrection. He granted that he himself had resisted the evidence when he had first heard it. Indeed, he had everything to lose if he accepted it. His fiery persecution of the Christians proved at least that he was an impartial witness. So he pleaded before that group of high and mighty potentates. What a contrast between their splendid robes and sparkling jewels, and the poor, worn, shackled prisoner! But they are remembered only because of this chance connection with Paul, while Paul has led the mightiest minds of subsequent ages.

70. Obedient to His Heavenly Vision.

Acts 26: 12-21. Nowhere else is there such deliverance from the glare and cross-lights of earth as is afforded by a vision of the face of Jesus, brighter than the sun at noon. To everyone there comes the opportunity of catching a vision of that face, sometimes reflected in a human one, as Paul first saw it in the countenance of Stephen. It confronts us when we go on forbidden paths, and summons us to arise and follow the life which is life indeed.

Verse 16: What we have seen is only a part of the great unveiling. He will show us other and greater things than these. *Verse 17:* We shall be delivered, even as we are sent. The Master holds himself responsible for our safety while we are engaged in his work. *Verse 18:* We have here an anticipation of Col. 1:19.

We must not disobey the heavenly visions that visit us. When Paul in his dream beheld the beckoning Macedonian, he made a straight course for Europe. Sometimes, in obeying, the first appearances are discouraging, as when the missionaries, on landing at Philippi, met only a few women beside the little river; but the final results will justify the first stepping-out of faith.

71. Convincing His Inquisitors.

Acts 26:22-32. Paul was in his element. He was delivering to kings and governors the testimony which it was the constant object of his life to give, when suddenly he was stopped by Festus, who, on hearing of the resurrection of the dead, accused Paul of madness. Paul addressed him with perfect respect, and then turned to King Agrippa for justification. But Agrippa did not choose to be entrapped in the discussion of these deep religious truths. With the contempt of a man of the world he smiled at the enthusiastic earnestness of this man who fancied that a wearer of purple would embrace faith in a crucified Messiah. It

was as if he said, "In a little while you'll be making me—*a Christian!*"

Paul immediately caught up his words. With evident sincerity he broke in with, *I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am* (here he must have raised his fettered hands) *except these bonds.* He was no common criminal, as his judges were fain to admit, and the proceedings of that day probably, under God, saved Paul's life, for Nero could hardly condemn to death a man who had been pronounced innocent by such hearers as these.

72. On a Dangerous Voyage.

Acts 27:1-13. The *we* indicates that the good physician, Luke, had rejoined the party. Separated from Paul by the Apostle's imprisonment, he now accompanied him on the ship to Rome. The centurion was indulgently disposed toward Paul. He may have been one of the brilliant crowd who had listened to Paul's last address. It was a most merciful Providence that placed the Apostle with such a man. He showed exceptional kindness in releasing Paul on parole at Sidon, that he might visit his friends, and, no doubt, provide himself with necessaries against the stormy and hazardous winter voyage.

The travelers were fortunate enough to find at Myra a large vessel carrying wheat from Egypt to Rome. There was room for the centurion, his soldiers, and prisoners, as well as such others as chose to accompany them. It was toward the close of September, and perhaps at Fair Havens the Apostle and any Jewish Christians on board may have observed the great Day of Atonement, the one fast of the Jewish calendar. The season for navigation with sailing vessels was drawing to a close, and Paul counseled delay, but his words were unheeded. The man who knew God was wiser than the men who knew the sea.

73. Savior of the Ship's Company.

Acts 27: 14-26. The crew, being greatly exhausted by severe exertion and want of food, were the more willing to listen to the Apostle when he came to the front with his wise counsels and good cheer. They had previously ignored his advice, but were glad and wise enough to take it on this second occasion.

How calm faith makes us! We can sleep soundly amid the roar of the storm and dream of angels when our hearts are stayed on God. His messengers can cleave their way through the murkiest skies and most drenching storms, to succor those who need their help. What a beautiful confession that was: *Whose I am and whom I serve!* Can we all appropriate it? The first clause is literally true of us all. We belong to Christ by creation and redemption. But do we acknowledge his ownership and place our all in his service?

In the midst of the excitement, Paul was able to give thanks. Let not the good habit of grace before meals drop out of our practice or homes. What a magnificent sentence is this also—*I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.* Yes, there is no peace outside of that faith. And it shall be, O believer, *your* happy experience!

74. Safety Dependent on Obedience.

Acts 27: 27-34. Paul presents a noble picture, standing there in the gray dawn while the heavy seas are breaking over the ship. He seems to have become by force of character the commander of the entire company. Certainly the soldiers and passengers owed their lives to his sagacity in penetrating the purpose of the sailors in leaving the ship. Note that he said to Julius, *ye cannot be saved* not *we.* The Apostle was so sure of God that he had no shadow of doubt as to his own preservation, v. 24.

Once more he encouraged them, and urged them to take food. He himself set the example, giving thanks

to God in the presence of them all. How brave and how inspiring was his behavior! They all began to be of good cheer. Men may say what they will about the impracticability of Christ's teachings, but let a man once begin to live by them, obeying them absolutely and trusting Christ utterly, and he becomes like a lion in courage. Through God we can do valiantly, for he treads down our enemies, Ps. 60:12.

75. Saving Paul Saved Them All.

Acts 27:35-44. The sailors endeavored to head the vessel toward the mouth of a creek that appeared before them, but she ran aground and stuck fast. It was here that a new and unexpected peril confronted Paul and his fellow-prisoners. The soldiers proposed to kill them, lest they should swim ashore and escape; but the centurion, perhaps out of gratitude to the man to whom they all owed their lives, forbade the soldiers and ordered everyone to endeavor somehow to get to land.

It does not so much matter *how* we get to heaven, as that we get there. Some who trust most in ritual and ceremonies may get there on broken pieces of the ship, but happier are they who can cast themselves directly upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. It was a drenched and shivering group that stood on the shore on that chill November day. Thank God, our condition will be very different when we emerge on the shore of eternity after crossing the cold waters. And as we stand on the beach of the glassy sea, all of us will render praise to him who has brought us safe home.

76. Kindness Richly Repaid.

Acts 28:1-10. It is pleasant to read of the kindness of these Maltese. In humanity everywhere there are kindly traits, and often there will be ready help for the really destitute.

Accidents are not punishments. The clinging of the viper to Paul's hand was not an evidence of the

anger of God, but was permitted in order to give these simple-hearted people an evidence which they would appreciate of God's care for his own.

How changeable is human opinion, shifting in a moment from the highest to the lowest estimate of our fellows, and basing that estimate solely on the favorable or unfavorable aspect of outward circumstances! Let us not judge by appearance, but righteously. Because Paul cast off the viper, they accounted him divine; if he had died, they would have thought him a felon. Let us also shake off temptation. We cannot prevent its attacking us, but we need not take the viper into our heart.

Paul's unfailing influence for good shows what a blessing even one Christian man can be wherever he goes, if he lives in the power of God.

77. Still Seeking His Own Kinsmen.

Acts 28:11-20. Paul went toward Rome, as we have seen, under very different circumstances from those that he originally anticipated; but, after all, they gave him the greatest opportunity of his life. The things that befell him were for the furtherance of the gospel. In no other way could he have approached or touched such men as the centurion, or the members of Cæsar's household, or Publius, or Nero himself.

It was very good of Julius to give Paul seven days' rest in the lovely bay of Puteoli, at the foot of Vesuvius. The little towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum were not yet overwhelmed. What teaching and what happy fellowship the little church now enjoyed! Forty-three miles from Rome, at Appii Forum, a body of Christians awaited the Apostle with greetings, and ten miles farther on, at the Three Taverns, was another group. If Paul had entertained fears about his reception, they were immediately dispelled. The Apostle thanked God and took courage.

How he had longed to see mighty Rome! He was now suffered to live in his own house, chained to a sol-

dier. In these circumstances he was secure from the hatred and plottings of the Jews, who in every city had endangered his life and impeded his labors.

78. Preaching in the World's Capital.

Acts 28:21-31. It was one of the earliest cares of Paul to summon the leading members of the Jewish community, that he might explain to them his position. He made clear that he had not opposed or injured his own people, and that he was suffering because of his devotion to the "Hope of Israel," by which he obviously referred to Christ. The Jews replied cautiously, declaring that they had not as yet received the formal charge against him. But as they professed a wish for further information, he begged them to fix their own day and come. This they did in considerable numbers. All day long he set before them arguments from Scripture and the story of his own experience. A few were convinced; the rest disagreed. Probably the debate toward its close became somewhat stormy, and the Apostle felt at liberty to quote Isa. 6:9, 10.

He, thereafter, turned to the Roman Christians, who had already been addressed in his memorable Epistle, in the last chapter of which is a list of names of those whom he loved in Christ. They were constantly coming in to cheer his loneliness and to hear his words, while Tychicus, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, and others brought news, greetings, and gifts from the churches he had founded.

(The questions on Sections 34–78, to be found on pp. 65–67, will serve as a review at this point.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE ACTS

OUTLINE.

(a) Who are the two main characters of the book? What chapters are allotted to each?
(b) What three cities mark progressive stages in the preaching of the gospel?
(c) How many missionary journeys did Paul make? Give an account of each.

INTRODUCTION.

(d) By whom was the Acts written? How is this established?
(e) How was the writer qualified for his task?
(f) Of what is the book a continuation?

SECTIONS 1–33. CHAPTERS 1–12.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. What other name might be applied to the book of Acts?
2. How was Matthias added to the company of the Apostles?
3. What signs attended the descent of the Holy Spirit?
4. What prophecy did Peter declare to be fulfilled by the gift of the Spirit?
5. How did Peter show that the 16th Psalm referred to Christ rather than to David?
6. What was the result of Peter's Pentecostal sermon?
7. What miracle of healing did Peter perform at the Gate Beautiful?
8. How did Peter make this miracle an occasion for preaching Christ?
9. Why were the Sadducees especially opposed to the preaching of the Apostles?
10. What did the Jewish leaders observe concerning the Apostles?
11. What was the prayer of the Apostles after they had been charged to keep silence?
12. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

13. Why were the Apostles imprisoned? How were they delivered?
14. What was the counsel of Gamaliel concerning the Apostles?
15. What led to the appointment of the first deacons?
16. What led to Stephen's arrest? How did he begin his defense?
17. What did Stephen relate about Moses' early life?
18. What had Moses declared concerning a prophet who was to come? In what respects was Jesus like Moses?
19. How did Stephen meet death?
20. Who was present at the martyrdom of Stephen? What was the result of the persecution that followed?
21. How was the real character of Simon Magus revealed?
22. How was the Ethiopian eunuch converted?
23. How was Saul's course stayed on the Damascus road?
24. What part did Ananias of Tarsus have in bringing Saul into the full light of the Christian faith?
25. How did Saul escape from the Jews who sought to kill him?
26. What notable miracle was performed at Joppa?
27. How was Peter prepared for his visit to the home of Cornelius?
28. How had Cornelius been prepared to receive Peter?
29. What was the result of Peter's ministry in this Gentile household?
30. How did Peter defend his course before the other Apostles?
31. What was the beginning of Christian work in Antioch? Why was Barnabas sent to Antioch?
32. What led to the imprisonment of Peter? How was he delivered from prison?
33. Where did Peter go when he was released? What was remarkable about the death of Herod?

SECTIONS 34–78. CHAPTERS 13–28.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

34. How did the foreign missionary work of the Church begin? What work did Paul and Silas do in Cyprus?

35. Why did Paul begin his address in Antioch by rehearsing the Old Testament history?
36. What things did he declare concerning Jesus Christ?
37. What was Paul's experience on the following Sabbath?
38. What miracle was performed at Lystra?
39. How were the people disposed toward Paul and Barnabas at first? What led the people to turn against them?
40. What controversy arose concerning the ritual of the Law? How did Peter reply to the Judaizers?
41. What was the counsel of James?
42. What was the message that was sent to the church at Antioch? What contention arose between Paul and Barnabas? What was the result?
43. Whom did Paul choose at Lystra as his helper? What vision and call came to Paul in the night?
44. Who was the first convert to Christianity in Europe? Why were Paul and Silas cast into prison?
45. How was the jailer converted? What rights did Paul and Silas claim as Roman citizens?
46. What was the experience of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica?
47. How was Paul received at Athens?
48. What message did Paul deliver on Mars' Hill? What was the result?
49. How long did Paul labor in Corinth?
50. What course did Paul follow on leaving Ephesus? What is said of the ministry of Apollos in Ephesus?
51. What special miracles were wrought by the hand of Paul on his return to Ephesus?
52. How was the genuineness of the conversion of the Ephesians attested? How did Demetrius seek to oppose the work of the Apostles?
53. How did the town clerk control the excited mob?
54. What things occurred during Paul's stay at Troas?
55. What was Paul's farewell message to the elders at Ephesus?
56. Why did Paul's departure cause special grief?
57. What was Paul's course from Miletus to Cæsarea? How did Agabus indicate Paul's future sufferings?
58. Why did Paul consent to purify himself, after the manner of the Jewish law, at Jerusalem?

59. Why was Paul taken from the Temple by violence? How was he rescued from the fury of the mob?
60. What was Paul's message to the people as he stood on the castle stairs?
61. At what point did the multitude refuse to listen further? How was Paul advantaged by his Roman citizenship?
62. How did Paul cause the Pharisees and Sadducees to oppose each other?
63. How did Paul's nephew save the Apostle's life?
64. Where was Paul sent by Claudius Lysias?
65. In the trial before Felix what charges were brought against Paul? How did the Apostle answer?
66. Why did Felix keep Paul in custody for two years?
67. Who followed Felix as governor? How did his action lead Paul to appeal to Cæsar?
68. Why was Paul asked to state his case before Agrippa?
69. What did the Apostle state to be the ground for his accusation?
70. How had Paul been obedient to the heavenly vision?
71. What was Agrippa's verdict concerning Paul?
72. By whom was Paul accompanied on the voyage to Rome?
73. How did Paul encourage his fellow-travelers in the midst of the storm?
74. Why did Paul insist that all should remain in the ship?
75. How did they finally escape to the land?
76. What work was accomplished by Paul among the people of Malta?
77. How did Paul at length arrive in Rome?
78. In what work was he engaged during his stay in the capital?

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II
THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

THE REVELATION OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH"

INTRODUCTION ..... 1:1–15.

1. *Salutation* ..... 1:1–7.
2. *Personal message* ..... 1:8–15.

THEME: THE REVELATION OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH" ..... 1:16, 17.

I. THE UNIVERSAL NEED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ..... 1:18—3:20.

1. *By the Gentiles* ..... 1:18—2:16.
2. *By the Jews* ..... 2:17—3:20.

II. THE FREE GIFT OF DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS ..... 3:21—5:21.

1. *Bestowed through Faith in Christ* 3:21–31.
2. *Promised in God's Dealings with Abraham and David* ..... 4.
3. *Confirmed by Christian Experience* 5:1–11.
4. *The New Creation Compared with the Old* ..... 5:12–21.

III. THE REFUTATION OF OBJECTIONS .... 6—7.

1. *Salvation by Grace Means the Overcoming of Sin* ..... 6:1–14.
2. *Salvation by Grace Brings a Higher Obligation than That Imposed by the Law* ..... 6:15–23.
3. *Salvation by Grace Accomplishes What the Law Could Only Command* ..... 7.

IV. THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE 8:1–39.

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2. *No Humiliation* .....8:18–27.
3. *No Separation* .....8:28–39.

V. God's Purpose for the Jews and Gentiles .....9—11.
1. *The Falling Away of the Jews*....9:1—11:12.
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3. *The Restoration of the Jews* ....11:25–36.

VI. The Christian's Character and Conduct .....12:1—15:13.
1. *The Christian as a Man* .....12:1–21.
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1. *Paul's Missionary Program* .....15:14–29.
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4. *Benediction* .....16:25–27.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

This Epistle, together with those to the Corinthians and the Galatians, is allowed by all critics save a negligible minority to have been the production of the Apostle Paul. It was written from Corinth during the three months that he spent in Greece, Acts 20:3, and before he started on his last journey to Jerusalem, to carry contributions to the poor Christians there, Rom. 15:19-25.

Though the Apostle was personally unacquainted with the majority of those addressed, yet the list of personal messages, in the closing chapter, is very large. He felt, too, a special responsibility laid upon him to instruct them in Christian truth. No Epistle has so many allusions to the law of God, but this was in harmony with the method of thought that was congenial to this Christian church, situated as it was in the mighty city that laid the foundations of law and order for subsequent generations.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

1. The Apostle's Burning Desire.

Romans 1:1-12. Upon the threshold of his greatest Epistle, Paul describes himself as a bond-servant. Such humility as his qualified him to be the medium of God's wondrous revelations. How great must be the Master who has the absolute devotion of such a man! Paul was *called* to be an Apostle; we are all *called* of Jesus Christ, and *called* to be saints, vs. 1, 6, 7. Note that emphatic reference to our Lord's dual nature, vs. 3, 4.

Long before Paul saw the faces of these Christians in Rome, he had been led out in prayer for them. He had won the battle before entering the battle-field. How noble it was on the Apostle's part to say that *his* faith was strengthened by *their* faith, as theirs by his! v. 12. There is a wonderful give-and-take in the service of God. Each of us helps or hinders. None is neutral.

It is quite evident that prayer counted for much with the Apostle. This journey of his was the subject of continual supplication. He knew that much was to be obtained through prayer, which would otherwise be missed. Remember that *your* journeys must also be in the will of God, v. 10.

2. The Only Power of Salvation.

Romans 1:13-23. We owe everything to our Lord, but since we can make him no direct return, he has made men his residuary legatees. We are to think of others as having a claim upon us for his dear sake. In helping *them,* we repay *him.* But note the Apostle's humility—*as much as in me is,* v. 15. Paul was not indifferent to the claims of intellectual culture. He had been thoroughly trained in Hebrew and Greek literature. The high culture of the Roman world was appreciated by the student of Gamaliel for what it was

worth; but he was not ashamed to preach the gospel in its capital because it carried with it the divine dynamic. It was *power* unto salvation. The Stoic, for instance, had a high ethical code, but it was ineffective for want of the driving power of Pentecost. The one condition is faith—*to every one that believeth*, v. 16.

Every man born into the world has an opportunity of knowing right and wrong from the inner witness of conscience, and of learning something of God from his works. Men will be judged by their attitude toward these two luminaries. Notice, however, that sad, strong word! Too many *hold down* the truth, v. 18, R.V. They deliberately endeavor to throttle it.

3. From Gross Sins of the Flesh.

Romans 1:24-32. Few men knew as much as did Paul of the unutterableness of human need. In terrible words he enumerates its various aspects. Truth would enter human hearts from God's work in nature and from conscience, yet men pull down the blind and close the curtain. It is not that they do not know, but that they *refuse* to have God in their knowledge. They shun the thought of God, Ps. 10:4. They will not lift their happy faces toward him with filial confidence. Thus a heavy darkness steals over them and veils his presence.

The next downward step is uncleanness; and when once men have deliberately chosen the downward path, there is nothing to stop them. They go headlong from one point to another in their descent into darkness. When our hearts turn from the purifying presence of God, they become the haunt of every foul bird and noisome reptile. What a marvel it is that out of such material God can even create saints!

4. Leave Judgment unto God.

Romans 2:1-11. In this chapter the Apostle turns to address the Jews. His purpose is to prove that though they may deem themselves superior to the

Gentiles and capable of judging them, they may be therefore liable to more severe judgment; because, notwithstanding their superior knowledge, they commit the same sins. God will judge men, not by their professions but by their works. Those who are harshest in condemning others are often guilty of the same sins, though in their own case they manage to find some excuse which extenuates their shortcomings. Rid yourself of the beam in your own eye, that you may see clearly how to rid your brother of his mote, Matt. 7:5.

God's silence does not mean indifference, but the desire to give opportunity to repent. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne, Rev. 5:6. Our redemption is by his precious blood, and that alone; but the rewards of the future, and the enjoyment of what God means by life, are conditioned upon our obedience. Glory, honor, and peace are within your reach, if you will accept the reconciliation offered you in Christ, which will bring you into at-one-ment with God; and if you will live to do your Heavenly Father's will.

5. The Searcher of All Hearts.

Romans 2:12-20. The Apostle goes on to show that all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, will be judged by the same standard. For the Jew that law was written upon the pages of the Old Testament; but for the Gentiles, who possessed neither Moses nor Sinai, it was written on the tablets of the heart and known as "conscience." The difference between the two is comparable to that between the time of day indicated by the sun and by the watch which each man carries in his pocket. It is a blessed and profound truth, which makes all men amenable to God's judgment, that deep down in every man's soul he has engraven his holy law.

How clearly Scripture bears witness to the eternal judgment! Acts 17:31. The secrets of men are to be judged, v. 16. How thankful we should be that those who stand in Christ shall not come under condemna-

tion! He has borne the curse of a broken law for us, and is not ashamed to call us brethren, Heb. 2:11.

6. He Requires Heart-Obedience.

Romans 2:21-29. The Jew relied upon the position given him by the privileges and rites of Judaism, although his religious life, as such, had shrunk within these outward things, as a seed rattles in its pod. The Apostle's argument is meant to show that personal irreligion and unbelief will neutralize all the benefit that outward rites might promise; while humble faith will compensate for any disadvantage which might result from heathen origin and environment.

The Jew will become as a Gentile, unless he have the *spiritual* counterpart to *outward* rites, while Gentiles will become as the Chosen People of God, if they have that separation of soul and life which was set forth in the initial rite of the Jew. See Col. 2:11. The mere outward rite does not constitute sonship to Abraham; and he who has never undergone it, but by faith has put away all filthiness of flesh and spirit, is entitled to all the promises made to Abraham and his seed.

7. God Faithful Though Men Be Faithless.

Romans 3:1-8. The Jewish people had a great treasure entrusted to them for the benefit of the whole world. This position as stewards for mankind conferred upon them very special privileges, but also exposed them to searching discipline, if they should prove faithless. Some of these advantages are enumerated in 9:4, 5. But our failures cannot cancel God's faithfulness to his covenant promises, 2 Tim. 2:13. We may always reckon confidently upon his steadfastness to his engagements, whether to the individual or to the nation. It is wonderful, v. 5, how human sin has been a foil to God's glory, eliciting qualities in his love which otherwise had been unknown; but this cannot excuse our sinfulness.

If this excuse were admitted, God would clearly have

been unjust in punishing sin as he has done; and if that line of argument were maintained, it would be right to do evil, if good were always the outcome. Such an admission would open the door to all kinds of abomination, and the mere suggestion of such a conclusion to his argument ought to silence the objector and cover him with shame.

8. All Justly Under Judgment.

Romans 3:9-20. A number of quotations are advanced—mostly from the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament—establishing the hopeless evil of man's condition. These apply, in the first place, to God's peculiar people, the Jews; but if true of them, how terrible must be the condition of the great heathen world! Every mouth will be stopped and all the world brought in guilty before God, v. 19. Various organs of the body are enumerated, and in each case some terrible affirmation is made of inbred depravity. What need for salvation! What can atone for such sin, or cleanse such hearts, save the redeeming grace of God?

Law here is obviously employed in the wide sense of conscience as well as Scripture. It is God's ideal held up before our faces, to show us from what we have fallen. The looking-glass is intended, not to wash the face, but to show how much it needs washing. You may commend your soap, and no one will use it; but if you reveal the discoloring filth, people will be only too glad to avail themselves of the cleansing power which otherwise they would neglect and despise. The way to fill the inquiry-room is to hold up the divine standard before men's consciences.

9. All Freely Justified by Grace.

Romans 3:21-31. From the universal need the Apostle turns to the all-sufficient remedy. The Law and the Prophets hinted dimly at justification by faith, but did not unveil it. God's way of justification is to impute righteousness to the believer. He places us in that

position in law, before proceeding by the Holy Spirit to bring us into the *condition* of holiness. The perfect day is imputed to the dawn, the perfect flower to the seed, the finished picture to the crude sketch. As soon as we trust in Jesus we are viewed as standing in him and justified before the Law; but before us lies the great work of assimilation to his perfect likeness by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It is sin to *come short*, v. 23; and who among us has fulfilled his possibilities of godlikeness? v. 24; Gen. 1:26, 27. Though justification costs us nothing but the sacrifice of our pride, it has cost Christ his own blood, v. 25. The propitiatory, or mercy seat, was the golden lid of the Ark which the high priest sprinkled with blood. See Heb. 9:5. Faith has no room in her household for vaunting and boasting, v. 27. The Law is best honored when the Lawgiver, dwelling within us, fulfills it through us.

10. Blessedness Follows Faith.

Romans 4:1-8. In this chapter the doctrine of justification by faith is illustrated from the life of Abraham. It is evident that he was not justified because of his good works. Nothing is said of them, though he had crossed the desert in obedience to the divine command. No; he *believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*, v. 3. The life of God in the soul of man is one and the same in every age. The measure of light may vary from the twilight in Ur to the meridian glory of Patmos, but the attitude of the soul toward God must always be the same.

From the earliest times men have been justified by faith, Heb. 11:4. Faith has two invariable elements: attitude and receptiveness; that is, the right position toward God, and the power of receiving the full inflow of the divine nature. We are made "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4. This was the case with the great Hebrew pilgrim—first of the pilgrim race. Rising above the rest of his contemporaries, he

saw the advance gleam of the day of Christ and was glad, John 8:56. David also sings of the same grace which justifies the sinner and counts him as righteous, notwithstanding his iniquities and sins, Ps. 32: 1, 2.

11. This Blessedness Is for All.

Romans 4:9-15. In Abraham's case it is clear that he was justified when he was still a Gentile. The initial badge of Judaism was stamped upon him long after he had believed God. The Apostle lays great stress on this order of time: first faith, then obedience, and afterward circumcision, that made him the father and founder of the Jewish people. Justification is imputed to him in the first stage;—not in circumcision, not even in obedience, but in the simple act of believing God, as we have it in Gen. 15: 6. We do not hear of circumcision till chapter 17.

Clearly, then, if we Gentiles have Abraham's faith, we may also claim the same justifying righteousness, though we have not received any outward rite. And also, we may be reckoned among his children. If we enter into the meaning of these earlier stages of the patriarch's life, we may claim the *promises* made to him in uncircumcision. Count them up; they are yours. *We*, too, may become heirs of the world; in us also, because we are his seed, all mankind may be blessed.

12. Following Abraham in Faith in God.

Romans 4: 16-25. Notice the remarkable alteration made by the R.V. in v. 19. The A.V. suggests that Abraham refused to consider the physical disabilities which seemed to make the fulfillment of God's promise impossible; the R.V. says that he looked them all quietly in the face, as though taking into account all their significance and force. Then he looked to the promise; and after balancing one against the other, he decided absolutely and confidently that the Word of God must stand, however great and forbidding the

difficulties in the way. He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform.

Let us remember, then, that from the time we trust Christ—whatever may have been our present frailties and temptations—we are reckoned as righteous in the sight of God. Yes, and in addition, we may count on absolute deliverance from the power of sin. Do not look *down*, brooding over your weakness! Do not look *back* upon your past, strewn with failure! Look *up* to the living Christ! All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. 1:20.

13. Great Blessings through Christ.

Romans 5:1-11. We stand in grace; we look for glory. Our standing is sure, although apart from our feelings or deserts. It is ours forever, through union with the living Christ. It is our admission to the home of God's elect. We have passed the threshold and have received, in the antechamber, the new white robe. But being in the house we find several stories or tiers of ascent. They are marked by the phrases, *not only so* and *much more.*

Starting from faith, the staircase mounts from peace to hope, v. 2; from hope to love, v. 5; from reconciliation to salvation and life and joy in God, vs. 9-11, so that whatever he does, as well as whatever he is, awakens in our hearts responsive admiration and glad consent. Stand on these successive terraces in the mountain climb to take your breath and behold the far-spread landscape. Let us not be content with the ladder foot when all these rounds of light invite us. Especially ponder v. 10, where the Apostle distinguishes between reconciliation and salvation. What music there is in that wonderful phrase, *saved by his life!* By his life *for* us in heaven and *in* us by his Spirit.

14. Death through Adam, Life through Christ.

Romans 5:12-21. This is the profoundest and most fundamental section of the whole Epistle. It contains

an insight into the deep things of God, 1 Cor. 2:10. We must read it slowly and thoughtfully many times in order to catch its drift. In these comments we can only skim in the most superficial manner across the surface.

We are here taught the unity of the race, not only in Adam, but in Christ. Adam's sin has affected the standing of every man; but the grace and the obedience of the "One Man," Jesus Christ, have secured for all men the offer of the free gift. The guilt that lay upon the race by the sin of Adam has been removed from the race by the obedience of the Son of man to the Cross. None, therefore, are condemned, on account of that first transgression, or doomed for that primal fall. In a sense, all are made righteous; that is, all stand before God on the basis of their *individual*, rather than their *racial*, responsibility. We are not condemned with Adam, but may be condemned, if we refuse to avail ourselves of the grace of Jesus Christ. All that sin forfeited is put within our reach. Nay, we may reach higher heights than Adam, if we will only receive the abundance of the grace of Christ.

15. "Dead unto Sin, But Alive unto God."

Romans 6:1-11. It is not sufficient merely to *apprehend*, however clearly, our standing in Christ; we must see to it that the doctrine issues in a *holy life*. Nothing is more hurtful than to hold a truth intellectually, without giving it expression in character. Many who fight for the minute points of doctrinal accuracy are careless of the great demands of Christ for a life of godlike love. Therefore, after the Apostle's massive statements of doctrine, he now turns to discuss the way of a holy life. The work of Christ *for us* must lead to his work *in us* and deliverance from the power of sin.

All who believe in Christ are reckoned as having been included in his death. They did not make atonement for sin, but they died to the life of self-will, of

self-pleasing, of subjection to the world-spirit, of citizenship in the earth-sphere, and passed with him into the life of resurrection glory. This is the significance of the rite of baptism. "Mark that seal!" cries the Apostle. "You belong to the resurrection side of death. Live in union with the risen Redeemer."

16. "Sin Shall Not Have Dominion."

Romans 6:12-23. Standing with Christ on the resurrection side of death, we must present our whole being to God for his use. We have left forever behind, nailed to the Cross, the body of sin, Col. 2:14, and henceforth must see to it that every faculty shall become a weapon in God's great warfare against evil. Let your powers be monopolized by God, so that there shall be no room left for the devil, Eph. 4:27.

All serve some higher power, but *which?* Our real owner and master, whatever we may say to the contrary, is indicated by our life. We belong to the one whom, in a crisis, we obey. Service to sin leads to uncleanness, iniquity, and death. Service to God leads to righteousness, and that to sanctification, and that to eternal life. Run your life into the mold of holy precept, as the obedient metal into the sand-cast, v. 17, R.V. We have our reward in the present consciousness of the life which is life indeed.

17. The Law Makes Sin Known.

Romans 7:1-13. To make his meaning clear the Apostle now enters upon a parable drawn from domestic life. He says that we are married to the Law as our first husband, and seek, through union with it, to bring forth fruit unto God. Every convert earnestly endeavors, in the first impulse of the new life, to be good and to form, by incessant effort, a life that is pleasing to God. Like Cain we bring the fruit of the ground, extorted from the soil by the sweat of the brow.

But we are soon disappointed in the result. Our

laborious care ends in failure. Sinful desires are too masterful. As Luther said, "The old Adam is too strong for the young Melanchthon." Then we see that the Cross has put death between us and our painful effort. We learn that the marriage contract which bound us to our first husband, the Law, has been dissolved. We are set free to enter into marriage union with the blessed Lord, and he, by his indwelling Spirit, effects in us what our own energies have failed to produce. We are joined to him that was raised up from the dead, and bring forth fruit unto God.

18. The Conflict Within.

Romans 7:14-25. The Apostle gives a further statement of his personal experience of the inability of the soul to realize the divine ideal which has been revealed to it as the norm and type of its attainment. Life does not run smoothly. There are effort, strain, failure, the consciousness of sin, the dazzling glory of sunlight on inaccessible peaks. Why is this? It is due to the lack of "power unto salvation." We are not strong enough to win any victory. We are weak through the flesh. There is a leakage through which our good desires vanish, as water through a cracked vessel.

Self is ever the difficulty. Before we find Christ, or are found of him, we try to justify ourselves, and afterward to sanctify ourselves. Notice how full these verses are of *I,* and how little is said of the Holy Spirit. As the corpse of a criminal that was, in the old barbarous days, hung around the neck of a living man, so the flesh is to us, with all its evil promptings. But this background of dark experience, ending in vanity, vexation, disappointment, and misery leads to the following chapter, which is saturated with Pentecostal power. The distant anticipation of this revives us, like the scent of land to animals sick with a long voyage; and we thank our God.

19. New Life in the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-9. This may fitly be called the "chapter of the Holy Spirit." The Apostle has carefully kept this great theme in the background till he has well prepared the ground, by showing us our inability to attain our ideals apart from reinforcements of divine energy. Here is the motive power to drive our machinery! Here is the life-giving power of spring, which shall cause the seeds buried within us to burst forth in the garden of the Lord! See Isa. 61:10, 11.

There is no need to live in perpetual self-condemnation. As the living bird, obeying the laws of flight, is superior to the down-pull of gravitation, so where the life of Jesus is wrought and sustained in the heart by the incessant communications of the Holy Spirit, victory is given us over the perpetual down-pull of sin. We can only hate the spirit that crucified our Lord. The believer reckons himself dead to it, but alive to each prompting of God's Holy Spirit. Life, and peace, and righteousness dwell in the temple within. A more perfect goodness is thus produced in us than any external obedience to Sinai's code could ever have achieved.

20. Children and Heirs of God.

Romans 8:10-17. The Spirit here is of course the Holy Spirit, by whom Christ our Lord lives within us. It is passing wonderful that as the life which throbs in the heart beats also in the pulse, so the very life which is in Christ in glory is also in our hearts. Our main task is to put aside every barrier to its full expression. This is what the Apostle means by doing to death the practices, stratagems, and lawless promptings of the body, which are ever calling for ease and self-indulgence. There is no stage of our earthly pilgrimage at which we can dispense with the power of the Spirit of God for deliverance from the deeds of the body.

But there is another most blessed function of the

divine Spirit, v. 14. He is willing to lead us, to prompt our actions, to inspire our purposes, and to mold our characters. The more we yield to him, the deeper becomes our awareness of that filial relationship with God which breathes in the cry, *Abba, Father.* But note the wonderful climax, v. 17. If we yield to the Holy Spirit, he will conduct us into the divine treasure-house and bid us avail ourselves of the infinite resources which are there stored for our use, not in the *next* life, but in *this.*

21. Hoping for the Completed Redemption.

Romans 8:18-30. Creation groans for freedom from the serpent's trail. Like a captive maiden she sighs to be delivered from the curse which sin has brought upon her. The saints groan for the resurrection of the body and their full admission into the complete enjoyment of redemption. The Spirit also groans for the speedy accomplishment of God's purposes—the salvation of the lost, the unity of the Church, and the advent of the Father's kingdom. His yearnings express themselves through the prayers of the saints.

Sorrowful soul, take comfort from v. 28! All things are *working;* there is no stagnation. They are *working together,* like the cogs of two wheels revolving in different directions. They are all *working for good.* The only condition is *love* on our part. Those who love God are loved by God, and all winds blow from the quarter of God's love. And that love is a sure sign and token that they have been called; and if called, they may be sure that they are on the moving stairway which is bearing them up and on through successive stages to glory.

22. No Separation from Christ's Love.

Romans 8:31-39. This is the close of the Apostle's argument. He has shown that believers are dear to God because they are in Christ; that their every need has been anticipated and provided for; that their guilt

has been canceled and provision made for their holy and victorious character; that the Holy Spirit is in them and with them forever; that sin is under their feet and heaven over their heads;—what, then, have they to fear?

Paul then goes on to show that the love of God is unaffected by even the most extreme changes of our condition—*neither death, nor life*, v. 38. That it is undiverted from us by any other order of beings, whether *angels, principalities*, or *powers*. That it is universally present *throughout creation*. And finally, that this love is *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. But in order to know and experience this love, we must be united to the Lord Jesus by a living faith. Then we shall be *more than conquerors*, that is, we shall not only be victorious, but shall get spoil out of the very things that have hurt us.

23. Longing for His Kinsmen.

Romans 9:1-13. Our consciences should be continually bathed in the light and warmth of the Holy Spirit, v. 1, that the inward witness may be maintained in its integrity. We must love as Moses and Paul did, v. 3, before we can understand Exod. 32:32 and Gal. 3:10. The Hebrew nation was marvelously privileged by *adoption* as God's firstborn, by having the Shekinah *glory* and by being called to maintain the witness of the Temple and its *services*, v. 4. But these privileges were granted, not for the nation itself, but for the blessing of mankind. This is the meaning of election. There are elect races, elect nations, elect souls, that they may be able to impart of what they have received, and communicate whatever advantages have been intrusted.

The sorrowful admission must be made that a very large proportion of the Hebrew race had missed the privileges to which they were entitled, because they had regarded these merely as intended for their own comfort and enrichment, v. 6. This was the outstanding difference between Esau and Jacob. It is plain that

DIANA OR CHRIST? Romans 8:35-39.

From Painting by EDWIN LONG. Modern British Artist.

the hatred in v. 13 means nothing more than relative repudiation, as it does in Matt. 6:24 and Luke 14:26. No personal animosity can obtain in the nature of the God of love except that he withholds from the recreant soul the full manifestation and outflow of his love.

24. The Righteousness of God's Choices.

Romans 9:14-24. God desires to do his best for every man. But, as in the case of Esau, who wantonly sold his birthright, and of Pharaoh, who turned all God's revelations into occasions of aggravated resistance and stronger revolt, the Heavenly Father is sometimes compelled to cast away those who might assist in the execution of his purposes, and use inferior vessels made from common clay. In the earlier part of the conflict with the proud Egyptian monarch, it is said that *he* hardened his heart, and afterward that *God* hardened it, Exod. 8:15; 10:20. To the froward God becomes froward; that is, the means that he takes to soften and save will harden, just as the sun which melts wax hardens clay.

The same power which was thwarted and resisted by the unbelief and stubbornness of the Chosen People, has taken up us Gentiles, who have had none of their advantages, and what wonderful mercy has he shown to us! *Riches of glory on vessels of mercy!* v. 23. What an argument for us all not to resist the grace of God, which strives with us so earnestly and continually! God can make saints out of the most unlikely material. Let us see that he has full opportunity.

25. Stumbling over the Cornerstone.

Romans 9:25-33. There has been a notable transference of privilege from the Jew to the Gentile believer. This is not due to fickleness on God's part, but to a fatal defect in the Hebrew people. The vessel that was marred in the potter's hand suffered not from the clumsiness of the potter, but from some inherent flaw

in the clay. The Chosen People stumbled over the law of faith and rejected their Messiah. The Gentiles, on the other hand, have exercised faith in him, and have thereby attained a justifying righteousness. There is no caprice with God, "neither shadow that is cast by turning," Jas. 1:17. Any apparent change in *his* dealings is determined by *our* attitude toward him.

Jesus is a stone of stumbling to the blind, but all who confide in him and rest on him shall not be put to shame. God has laid the foundation of our salvation deep in the waters of death and judgment. In the death of Christ he condemned sin in the flesh, and now we who are built into him, as a stone is clamped to the foundation, shall rest secure when the last great storms sweep over land and sea.

26. Missing God's Way of Salvation.

Romans 10:1-10. How earnestly the Apostle loved his own people! All their hatred of him could not extinguish the passionate devotion which he entertained for them. "Apostle to the Gentiles" he might be, but he was essentially *an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham,* of the *tribe of Benjamin,* 11:1. The whole reason of their rejection of the gospel lay in their inveterate refusal to *submit,* v. 3. Is not that the difficulty with us all? It is not that we cannot believe, but that we will not submit to God's way of righteousness, so humbling is it to our pride.

If only God would allow us to scale the heights or plumb the depths, to do some great thing, to make some vast sacrifice, we should be satisfied to be saved, and his help in the process would not be resented. But it is intolerable to our proud hearts to be told that our own efforts are useless, and that the exclusive source of salvation is God's grace.

Notice the distinction between *righteousness* and *salvation,* v. 9. The one is objective; the other subjective. The first, our standing before God, the latter, the sanctification of our inner life, which not only de-

pends upon the belief of the heart, but requires the confession that Jesus Christ has become Lord and King of the whole nature.

27. Needing Messengers of Good Tidings.

Romans 10:11-21. The Chosen People chafed, not only at the freeness of God's justifying grace, but because there was no difference made, so far as salvation was concerned, between them and the Gentiles. Surely there ought to be a special doorway for them into eternal life, apart from that trodden by the feet of the ordinary heathen world! Were they not the children of Abraham, the friend of God? Here the Apostle was compelled to withstand them. No, said he, it cannot be! There is no difference between Jew and Greek. All have sinned, and the same Lord is over all, rich to those who call upon him, of whatever nationality.

The guests for whom the marriage feast was prepared refused to come, and therefore it was decreed that the servants of the great King should preach the gospel *to every creature,* and scour the highways and byways of the world for guests. The remainder of the chapter, v. 14, etc., therefore vindicates the Apostle in his determination to preach the gospel beyond the limits of his own people; and in doing so, he was acting upon the old words of Deut. 32:21. God would provoke their jealousy by a *no-people,* as they had provoked his by *no-gods,* v. 19.

28. A Remnant Saved by Grace.

Romans 11: 1-12. In the worst days of Hebrew apostasy there was always an elect handful that did not go astray after other gods. It was so in the days of Elijah; and it was a comfort to the faithful heart of Paul to believe that, amid the general opposition excited by the preaching of the gospel, there were many secret lovers of the Cross who were true to the Messiah and his claims. Man can never count these quiet, unknown, holy souls, who, like the sweetest wild flow-

ers, can be detected only by the fragrance of their lives. But *God* counts them, to whose grace and care all that is good in them is due.

The few seek and find, because they stoop to seek in God's predetermined way and along his lines. But when men set themselves against these, they become hardened and overwhelmed by a "spirit of stupor," v. 8, R.V. When Scripture says that God gives them this, it simply means that such state of insensibility is the working out of an inevitable law. But the Apostle cherished the secret hope that the avidity with which the Gentiles were accepting the gospel would, in the mystery of God's providence, have the ultimate effect of bringing the Chosen People back to him whom their fathers crucified, v. 11.

29. Others Grafted In by Faith.

Romans 11:13-24. Paul never abandoned the hope that ultimately Israel would come back to God in Christ. He believed that God's promises pointed in that direction, and that, though centuries might pass, those sure guarantees would be abundantly fulfilled. Notice his expressions: *how much more their fullness*, v. 12; *what shall the receiving of them be, but from the dead?* v. 15; *God is able to graft them in again*, v. 23; *all Israel shall be saved*, v. 26; *that he might have mercy upon all*, v. 32. He realized, however, that Israel must temporarily make way for the ingathering of the Church, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek; and that when the Church has been formed and gathered to its Lord, then the time for the ingathering of the Jewish people will have arrived.

Let us see to it that we Gentiles understand our position as being permitted to partake of *the root and fatness of the olive tree*, v. 17. Christ was the root of that tree, and it is from his rich nature that all the freshness and fatness, all the quickening and energy, all the love and grace of the Hebrew Scriptures and heri-

tage of promises were gained. Whatever Israel had, we may have. Let us go up and possess the land!

30. That God "Might Have Mercy upon All."

Romans 11:25-36. "Mysteries" are the reasons and principles of the divine procedure which are hidden from ordinary minds, but revealed to the children of God by the Spirit, who searches the deep things, 1 Cor. 2:10. We cannot tell how near the brim we are, or when the fullness of the Gentiles will fill the predestined measure. It may be much nearer than we suppose, and then the door will be closed, and the Hebrew nation will be grafted in to serve the divine program in the last stages of human history. They are still beloved for their fathers' sake, and the day is coming when all their sins will be forgiven and taken away.

We may go a certain distance in the devout understanding of the ways of God, but there is a point beyond which we cannot advance; and as we gaze down into the profound abyss of the divine dealings, we must cry, *O the depth!* v. 33. The origin, the maintenance, and the ultimate end of creation, providence, and redemption, is God. To him must be the glory! In other words, we shall find that the whole story of sin, redemption, and salvation will unravel and reveal the nature of God, as the prismatic band of color the sunlight.

31. Devoting Self and Using Gifts.

Romans 12:1-8. Therefore links this practical appeal to the whole of the sublime argument, which reaches its climax in the previous chapter. It is easier to die once for God than to live always the surrendered life. But nothing so pleases God as daily surrender, the sacrificed and yielded will tied by cords to his altar. Such an attitude is the only reasonable one we can assume. If God be all we profess to believe, he is worthy of all we are. But we are reminded that the

world is ever seeking to mold us to its will, and we need the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may withstand its baleful influence. We need to be transformed—that is, transfigured—by the renewing of our mind. Please God, and you will be pleased with the will of God.

Notice in v. 3 that God deals out according to the measure of our faith. Let us ask that it may be "pressed down and running over." In proportion as we are united to the head, we are members of one another. We may not recognize each other, or be recognized by the world as one, but in his sight there is only one body, v. 5. Let each learn what he can do best, and devote his best to it. To give or rule aright is equally a gift with teaching.

32. Living as a Christian.

Romans 12: 9-21. In this section the Apostle shows how the great principle of consecration must affect the details of conduct. It is most necessary to insist on these practical issues. At some impressive religious convention, where the vision of a surrendered and transfigured life is presented, sensitive souls are led to make the vows and claim the plane of life which have been presented; but on their return to the commonplaces, there is no perceptible improvement in their speech, or tone, or attitude. This induces shame and contempt. Hence the great wisdom of the Apostle's particular teaching in this and the following chapters.

The lumbering wagon must be hitched to a star. We must not be star-gazers only. God has endowed us with faith as the receptive faculty, through which we may receive his blessed help. In the power of the Holy Spirit let us set ourselves to our common tasks, thinking humbly and soberly of ourselves, lovingly of our associates, and reverently of God. We are inspired to fulfill the obligations of our position, whether in giving money or in teaching the ignorant: whether in

showing mercy or in exercising authority, because all is done as under the eye of the great Master of the household.

33. Rendering "to All Their Dues."

Romans 13:1-7. Human government, like the existence of the family relationship, is a divine institution. It is part of the order of the world and rooted in the original conception of the race. It was never intended that we should live as individual units, but as members of family and state. It is evident, therefore, that the authority which is wielded by the ruler expresses, generally speaking, a divine principle. The comfort and well-being of society are better attained in that way than in any other, and the recognition of this principle carries with it the assent of our intuitive convictions. We must *render therefore to all their dues.*

But it must be acknowledged, also, that there are limits beyond which imperial or legislative authority may not go. When Nero, according to tradition, bade the Apostle to abandon his faith as the condition of liberty, Paul did not hesitate to say that the emperor was intruding on a province to which he had no claim, and that he must obey God rather than man. So far as our life in a community goes, there must be some form of government, which may be modeled according to the varying opinions of men, whether monarchical or republican, autocratic or socialistic; but when once it has been agreed upon, it must be obeyed, unless it forfeits confidence, in which case a new order becomes necessary.

34. Love Fulfills the Law.

Romans 13:8-14. The one debt which can never be discharged is love. Because we can never be out of debt to God, we are called upon to show unending love to man. So long as we love we cannot injure; and therefore the man who is always caring for others as much as, or more than, he does for himself (and this

latter is the Christian ideal) is fulfilling that ancient law.

We resemble soldiers slumbering in their tents while dawn is flushing the sky. Presently the bugle rings out its awakening note. The long night of the world is ending, the dawn is on the sky, and all the malignity of men and demons cannot postpone it by a single hour. Let us put off the garments which only befit the darkness, and array ourselves in the armor of the day! What is that armor? In a word, it is JESUS CHRIST—his character and method, his unselfishness and purity—so that when men see us, they may involuntarily turn to him.

35. Consideration toward Brethren.

Romans 14:1-12. The weak conscience needs further instruction. It is anæmic and requires the hilltop, with its further view and bracing air; but in the meantime its owner must be guided by its promptings. A man must not take a certain course merely because others do so, unless he can justify their bolder faith and larger freedom. By thought and prayer and the study of God's Word, conscience becomes educated and strengthened, and ceases to worry as to whether we should be vegetarian or not; whether we should observe saints' days, or adopt a specific method of observing the Sabbath. Some people are constantly wondering and questioning about such things, as though their eternal salvation depended on minute observances.

Such would have found but scant comfort from the Apostle. He would have said, "Do the best you know, and when you have once adopted a certain method of life, follow it humbly, until some wider view is opened before you by the Spirit of God." The main principle for us all is to live and die to please our Lord. He is our Master, and it will be for him to allot our rewards. In the meantime let us not judge one another, but live in love, leaving each to work out the plan of his own life as his Master directs.

36. Yielding Rights for Others' Sake.

Romans 14:13-23. We must be careful of one another's faith. Unkind criticism or ridicule, or the strong pressure of our arguments and reasons may impede the divine life in weaker natures by leading them to act in defiance of their own conscientious convictions. We must not flaunt our greater liberty or urge men to act against their conscience. We may, of course, temperately and lovingly explain why we are not held by minute scruples. We may show, as Paul did repeatedly, that Christ has called us to liberty; but we must not attempt the regulation of one another's conduct from without. The sanctuary of the soul must be left uninvaded. The Spirit alone may speak his oracles in the shrine.

Leave each disciple to his own Master, each plant to the Gardener, each child to the divine Fatherhood. In many things you may grant yourself a wider liberty than others allow themselves; but it must be used wisely, and you must refuse to avail yourself of it whenever those around you may be positively imperiled. We need not mind the censorious criticism of the Pharisee, but like the Good Shepherd with his flock, we must accommodate our pace to that of the lambs, Isa. 40:11.

37. Following Christ in Pleasing Others.

Romans 15:1-13. This chapter is remarkable for its threefold designation of God. The God of patience and comfort, v. 5; the God of hope, v. 13; and the God of peace, v. 33. Our character may be deficient in these things, but his fullness is there for us to draw upon. There is no stint or lack for those to whom he says, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

We must always be on the lookout for the weak, the heavy-laden, and the downcast. Let us help them with their burdens, anxieties, fears, and questionings—imparting to them something of our cheery hope. Never

pleasing ourselves; merciful to others; though merciless in the standard and criticism we apply to our own conduct; comforting ourselves with the Word of God, that we may be able to impart these divine consolations to others. Where such conditions are realized, life becomes a dream of heaven actualized in flesh and blood. But we must fulfill the injunctions of vs. 9-13, rejoicing in praise and abounding in hope. The outlook on the earth-side may be dark and depressing, but uncurtain your windows toward God—see, the land is light.

38. A Preacher Who Found His Own Field.

Romans 15: 14-21. A superficial judge of the Apostle's life at the time to which he refers might have supposed him to be a mere Jewish traveler, hurrying to and fro, under circumstances of extreme poverty and with no special results. But, in fact he was laying the foundations of the Christian commonwealth. His one ambition was to present the Gentiles as a whole burnt-offering to God; see v. 16. The phrase there is suggestive of the supreme sacrifice which was nobly realized in the strength of purpose that led those churches, shortly afterward, to yield holocausts of martyrs under Nero's persecutions.

All this was due to Christ working through the Apostle. Anything that was not wrought through the power of the indwelling Christ was not worth recounting. The work which really told was not what Paul did for Christ, but what Christ did through Paul. It is noticeable how careful Paul was to break up new ground. This is especially characteristic of all the best and highest forms of work. It is a poor and mean church which recruits itself from the labors of others, but has no power to secure converts from the world!

39. Ambitious To Render Service.

Romans 15:22-33. The Apostle felt that it was in the line of the divine will that he should visit Rome,

1:11. Relying, as he did, on the efficacy of prayer, it is not surprising to find him urging his Roman friends to unite with him in asking, as in vs. 31 and 32, that his way may be made plain. The prayer was not answered quite as he expected. He little thought that he would come as a prisoner, bound to a soldier, and at the expense of the Roman Empire. Yet he came with joy, and found refreshment and rest with the beloved circle of disciples whom he enumerates in the following chapter. How little do the most of us know of this striving in prayer! But how near we get to absent friends when we pray like this! "Strive together *with me.*"

The love of the Spirit is a very delightful phrase. It bears witness to the personality of the Holy Spirit, for *love* cannot be attributed to an influence. It also shows the confidence with which we may commit ourselves to his gracious indwelling and prompting. He is the *Holy* Spirit, but we need not shrink from him as an awful guest. It also reminds us how deeply he may be grieved. There is no grief so poignant as that which is suffered by love.

40. Personal Interest in Fellow-Christians.

Romans 16:1-16. Here is a window into Paul's heart. He was apparently disowned by his own kindred, yet, as the Lord had promised, he had mothers, sisters, and brothers a hundred-fold. What a contrast there is between the spirit of this chapter and that of the mere disputant or theologian, the stoic or monk. We see also the courtesy, purity, thoughtfulness, and tenderness of Christian relationships.

Women are here—Phœbe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Persis, Julia, and others. The Apostle realized the immense help that holy women could furnish in the ministry of the gospel. Men are here—old and young, fathers, brothers, and sons. Lovely titles are given with a lavish, though a discriminating hand—*succorer, helpers, beloved, approved in Christ, saints.* How espec-

ially beautiful the appellation, *the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord*! The kiss was the common mode of greeting, but there was to be a new sanctity in it, as though Christ were between. This church in Rome was a model for other churches. Would that *we* could realize the same spiritual unity that presided over the gatherings of these early saints!

41. Receive Helpers: Shun Hinderers.

Romans 16:17-27. Those who cause divisions on obscure points of doctrine are to be avoided, lest they lead us away from the fundamentals. We need to be wise in heavenly wisdom and guileless in regard to evil. The pure, childlike heart is quick to discern the right and wrong, because of the breath that evil leaves on its clear mirror.

In the case of each believer, however weak and helpless, God is pledged to fulfill to us Gen. 3:15. Not merely will he help us to do it, but he will do it for us. It is a remarkable conjunction; God against *the devil* and peace *bruising*.

These postscripts, from v. 17, were probably written by Paul's own hand. See 1 Cor. 16:21. We are not all, as were Gaius and Erastus, men of note and wealth, but we can all resemble Quartus, "a brother." The mystery or secret with which the Epistle closes refers to the redemption wrought out by Jesus during his earthly ministry, 1 Tim. 3:16. But this was no new thing, as it had been in the mind of God from times eternal, Rev. 13:8.

(For Review Questions see next page.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

OUTLINE.

(*a*) What is the great theme of this Epistle?
(*b*) What subjects are treated in what you regard as its three greatest chapters?

INTRODUCTION.

(*c*) Where was this Epistle written? At what time?
(*d*) How generally is it regarded as the work of Paul?
(*e*) Why does this Epistle deal so largely with the divine law?

SECTIONS 1–41. CHAPTERS 1–16.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. Why did Paul long to see the Christians in Rome?
2. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
3. What does the Apostle state regarding the sins of the heathen world?
4. Why are all men without excuse?
5. To what law were the Gentiles amenable?
6. Why did special responsibility rest upon the Jew?
7. If all are under condemnation what advantage does the Jew possess?
8. Why can no one be justified by the works of the Law?
9. What is meant by the "righteousness of God"?
10. How was Abraham saved?
11. How is circumcision seen to be unnecessary to salvation?
12. Why was the promise made to Abraham a challenge to his faith?
13. How does God commend his love to us?
14. How is Christ contrasted with Adam?
15. What things are involved in union with Christ?
16. Why is grace a stronger motive to holiness than the Law?
17. What is the function of the Law?

18. What is the result of bondage to the flesh? How may deliverance be accomplished?
19. How did God condemn sin in the flesh?
20. To what does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit?
21. How does the Spirit help our infirmity?
22. What is the Apostle's supreme confidence?
23. Why did Paul grieve over his kinsmen?
24. Why has man no right to question God's sovereignty?
25. How were the Gentiles able to attain that which the Jews missed?
26. What is the distinction between righteousness and salvation?
27. What is the Apostle's great argument for missions?
28. Had God cast off his Chosen People?
29. What is the lesson of the parable of the olive tree?
30. Why has God shut up all unto disobedience?
31. How is the physical body a symbol of the Church?
32. What is the sole means by which evil may be overcome?
33. Why should governmental authority be respected?
34. What one word gives the sum of the law?
35. Why can no one live to himself?
36. What is the Kingdom of God?
37. What special obligation rests upon the strong? Why has Christ been made a minister of the circumcision?
38. Of what things alone does the Apostle dare speak?
39. With what purpose was he going to Jerusalem? What did he earnestly desire of the Christians at Rome?
40. What facts are apparent concerning Phœbe? In what terms does Paul speak of the character and work of the Roman Christians who were known to him?
41. Who was Paul's helper in writing the Epistle? What is the closing benediction?

III

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

SALUTATION .....1:1–3.

I. TRUE AND FALSE WISDOM .....1—6.

1. *Thanksgiving for the Grace Given to the Corinthians* .....1:4–9.
2. *The Cause of and Remedy for Divisions in the Church* .....1:10–31.
3. *The Basis of Paul's Ministry* .....2.
4. *The Function of the Apostles*.....3.
5. *The Labors of the Apostles* .....4:1–13.
6. *Conditions Which Require Paul's Presence at Corinth* .....4:14—5:13.
7. *Heathen and Christian Life in Contrast* .....6.

II. REPLY TO INQUIRIES FROM THE CORINTHIANS .....7—10.

1. *Concerning Marriage* .....7.
2. *Concerning Things Sacrificed to Idols* .....8, 10.

(*Apostolic Liberty*) .....9.

III. "A MORE EXCELLENT WAY" .....11—16.

1. *The Deportment of Women in the Church* .....11:1–16.
2. *The Observance of the Lord's Supper* .....11:17–39.
3. *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* .....12.
4. *The Greatest Gift* .....13.
5. *Speaking with Tongues* .....14.
6. *The Resurrection* .....15.
7. *The Offering for the Saints* .....16:1–8.
8. *Personal Matters* .....16:9–18.

CONCLUSION .....16:19–24.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

Corinth was an important and wealthy city. Having ports on two seas, it was a great trading center. Christianity was first introduced there by Paul on his second missionary journey. His continued labors were successful in building up a vigorous church. But on his leaving for other fields of labor, serious evils broke out among the members; some countenanced immorality, idol feasts, lawsuits in heathen courts, and immodesty among women. As tidings of these evils were brought to Paul at Ephesus, he addressed this letter to the Corinthian church "with many tears," 2 Cor. 2:4. The letter was written about 57 A.D. Several features of special interest characterize this Epistle —notably the gospel as the wisdom of God, the supremacy of love, and the doctrine of the resurrection.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. Enriched and United in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:1-11. It was pleasant to the church at Corinth to realize that one of their own number was associated with the Apostle in his great ministry. Compare v. 1 with Acts 18:17. We have been sanctified in Christ in the purpose of God, but we must make our calling sure by living as saints. Note Paul's liberality —it was enough for him if men called on Jesus as their Lord. Such he could receive as brothers. There was no strain of narrow sectarianism in his nature.

If we would live a true life, we must draw on Jesus Christ. Our riches are in him, awaiting our claiming and use. The unsearchable riches of Christ are at our disposal, but we must appropriate and use them. Let us begin to live as God's heirs. Utterance and knowledge are ours through the Holy Spirit. We have looked into ourselves for them. That is the mistake! We must look up and reach down. God has called us into partnership with his Son. We share his sorrows, sufferings, and labors for a world's conversion; he bids us share in his grace. The *perfecting* of v. 10 is the weaving together of a rent. Paul's object in this Epistle was the ending of the strife that had divided the Corinthian church.

2. The Cross God's Saving Power.

1 Corinthians 1:12-25. *Apollos* had gone straight from Ephesus to Corinth, Acts 19:1. A party gathered around him, especially attracted by his eloquence and intellectual brilliance. *Cephas* was Peter, and around his name the more conservative elements gathered. *Christ* stood for the promised glory of the Messianic kingdom. Paul was filled with dismay on hearing that a fourth division of the Church called themselves by his name. He told the Corinthians that whatever any

of their human teachers had done for them, they had contributed only different phases or viewpoints of truth, all of which service sank into absolute insignificance as contrasted with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The *cross* here implies not only the doctrine of the Atonement, but the humble bearing of the cross in daily life. There are many who wear a cross as an article of dress, but who evince nothing of its pitying, self-immolating, sacrificial spirit. Everyone needs a Calvary in the heart. Note from v. 18, R.V., margin, that being saved is a process, as well as an immediate experience. Oh to have grace to know the Cross, never to be ashamed of it, and to preach a crucified Saviour in a humble, crucified spirit!

3. God's Glory in Men's Weakness.

1 Corinthians 1:26—2:5. Like the sons of Jesse before Samuel, so do the successive regiments on which the world relies pass before Christ. The wise, the mighty, the noble, the great, the things that are! And the King says, I have not chosen these. The warriors with whom he will win the world to himself are the nobodies, the ciphers, the people who in the world's estimate do not count. Do not depreciate yourself, but give yourself to him; he will find a niche for you and make your life worth living. Notice that God has put you into union with Christ Jesus. Everything we need for life and godliness is in him; only let us make all that we can of our wonderful position and possessions.

Paul came to Corinth from Athens, where he had sought to win his hearers by a studied and philosophical discourse as best adapted to their needs. But as he entered Corinth, he appears to have deliberately determined that his theme would be the crucified Lord, and expressed in the simplest phrases. When we speak the truth as it is in Jesus, the Spirit is ever at hand to enforce our testimony by his demonstration and power.

4. God's Wisdom Spiritually Revealed.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16. The perfect are those who are full grown and matured in Christian experience. They need strong meat. For them there are blessed unveilings of the secret things of God, such as the profoundest thinkers of this world have never reached. The words in v. 9 must not be applied to heaven alone; in their first intention they belong to us in this mortal life. The human eye that has seen the fairest of earth's things, and the ear that has heard the sweetest strains of human melody, have never experienced the depths of enjoyment of those who have found the love of God in Christ. They who know Christ should not be content with the mere rudiments of the gospel, but should follow on to know those deeper things which evade men who are merely clever, but are revealed to those who are really good.

There are two types of men. There is the *spiritual* man, whose spirit is the temple and dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. He knows the thoughts of God, because he has a living union with the eternal Mind. And there is the *natural* man, possessing merely the intellect and conscience of ordinary humanity.

5. Prosperity Comes from God.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9. In all our relations with our fellow-men, Christ's followers must realize their obligations as members of one great family, with one God. A man may be *in Christ*, truly regenerate and forgiven for his past sins, and yet be carnal; that is, according to Rom. 7:18, he may be ruled by *me, I, self*. The marks of this inward disposition are set out here. He is a babe who needs to be fed with milk, little and often, because unable to digest solid food. He is a sectarian, throwing contempt on those who do not belong to his own school of thought. He allows himself to be infected with jealousy and strife. Let us test our Christian life by these symptoms. Where are we? And if we are conscious that *self* has

become enthroned as the governing motive of life, let us not rest till Christ takes its place.

It is not easy to learn that the planter or the waterer is just nothing at all, and that God is all. Let us think of ourselves only as God's instruments, and in a humble way as God's fellow-workers. It is a most helpful thought. Constantly when engaged in tilling the soil as evangelists or in building character as preachers and teachers, let us count on success, because of the all-power of our great Partner. He must give the policy and direction; it is our part to conform wholly to his will and guidance.

6. Build on the Sure Foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10-23. We are called upon to contribute our share to the building of saved souls which is rising through the ages, to be an habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. 2:21, 22. But in addition, we must not neglect the building of our own character on the one foundation, which is Jesus Christ. God has placed him to be the foundation of every structure which shall stand firm in all the tests of fire through which we are destined to pass. We must needs go on building day by day. Whatever we do or say is another stone or brick. It is for us to choose which heap of material we take it from; whether from that of the wood, hay, or stubble, or from that of the gold, silver, or precious stones.

All things serve the man or woman who serves Christ. The lowliest life may be a link in a chain of golden ministry which binds earth and heaven. Our Lord was constantly described in the Old Testament as the Servant of God. He said that he had come down to earth to do his Father's will. "I am among you as he that serveth." When we serve him as he serves the great purposes of God, then everything begins to minister to us. The extremes of existence, of creation, and of duration, all serve us.

7. Stewards Responsible to Their Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:1-13. At the most the ministers or teachers of God's Gospel are but stewards of the hidden things of God, according to Matt. 13:51, 52. They ought not to attract attention to themselves or to the way they purvey their Master's goods. Their prime object is to be faithful to their trust; to make much of the Master and as little as possible of themselves. Paul was not aware that he had violated his Master's confidence, but he could not be content till he had heard the Master's verdict on his life-work. Notice the four courts of appeal—my own judgment, your judgment, man's judgment, and Christ's. The Master will reverse many human judgments, but all will bear witness to the absolute justice of his verdict.

In vivid words the Apostle shows how great was the difference between the ease and self-satisfaction of the Corinthian church and the sorry plight to which he and his fellow-workers were often reduced. Many regarded them as the captives in a conqueror's triumphal procession, who behind the triumphal car were being marched to death. But it mattered little to them so long as Christ was adored, loved, glorified, and his Kingdom advanced.

8. Teaching Converts Christ's Ways.

1 Corinthians 4:14-21. The relationship between the Apostle and his converts was very tender. They were his children. They might have instructors and tutors, but they could have but one father; and as father he might have to use the rod. Love can be stern and punitive. Spare the rod and spoil the child. It is not pure but selfish love that forbears to speak and act strongly when eternal interests are at stake. This is an aspect of God's love which is likely to be overlooked. If we escape chastisement, we are bastards and not sons. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Heb. 12:5-11.

The beloved Timothy was sent to bring the recreant

church back to its old love and faith. He was well fitted to represent the Apostle till Paul could tear himself from his thronging duties at Ephesus. Notice that God's kingdom comes in power, not in word, v. 21. Is not this the reason why it comes so slowly? We treat it as though it would come through our much speaking, through eloquent and honeyed speech. But it is not so. It comes in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in that supremacy of the Divine Spirit over all other spirit forces. God send us more of this great dynamic!

9. Removing Germs of Evil.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13. The sin referred to in this chapter has been condoned by the Corinthian church, and this proved that the prevalent standard of morals was low. A man had married his father's second wife —his father having probably died. Such an alliance could not be tolerated. A condemnation of the sin must be pronounced by the whole body of believers, acting in concert with the Holy Spirit resident among them. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," Acts 15:28.

Paul compares the Corinthian church to the Children of Israel, who, after sprinkling the blood, kept the feast of joy within closed doors—a careful search having been made for any atom of leaven that had hitherto escaped scrutiny. So we should put away from our lives, homes, and churches everything that would offend the gracious Paraclete. Since Christ has been slain for us, we must daily feed on him with festal joy. Our loins must be girded as becomes those about to depart at a moment's notice. We must be ever on the alert to detect the summons for an exodus out of this dark Egyptian world into the world that is to come.

10. Settling Differences between Brethren.

1 Corinthians 6:1-11. The Apostle was clearly of the opinion that it was wiser for a Christian to bear injustice and wrong than to go to law before a heathen tribunal. It would have been a happy solution of

myriads of disputes if his advice had been followed. Where a course of lawless crime has to be arrested in the interests of the weak and defenseless, it *is* necessary to call in the law and police to vindicate and protect; but when our private, personal and individual interests alone are concerned, we should be wise to submit our case to arbitration or suffer patiently.

Who are the heirs of the kingdom of heaven, vs. 9-11? Do not inquire into their past history. There are pages in their lives that had better be obliterated and forgotten; or, if remembered, they should be the foil to set forth the matchless grace and love of God. Yes, that grace shall be our theme forever, when we recall the depths out of which it lifted us, and the heights to which it raised us. Let us note that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are named together. It is by the Holy Spirit that we become possessed of the nature of our Lord, which takes the place of our old evil nature and empowers us to repeat his life.

11. Keeping the Body Holy.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20. It is interesting to compare v. 12 with 10:23. There are four clauses in each verse, three of which are similar, but the last ones differ. The two laws that should govern our life in doubtful things, are first, the arresting of oneself in the doing of anything which threatens to become our master; and second, the abstaining from anything which threatens to be a stumbling-block in another's Christian life.

It is not enough to watch against temptation; we should be so filled with the Spirit of the risen Saviour that the desires of the flesh shall have no fascination. The power that raised the body of Jesus from the grave is surely strong enough to raise our bodies from the bondage of corruption and to translate them to the resurrection plane. Let us keep joined to the Lord by one Spirit, that he may pour his own living energy into our nature. When he redeemed us, he undertook to save us wholly and entirely—spirit, soul, and body, 1 Thess.

5:23. Hand the keeping of your body over to him. Consider that it is the forecourt of a temple, in the inner shrine of which the Holy Spirit lives; and as of old the glory of the Lord filled the whole structure, so trust the Spirit of Holiness to make and keep you whole.

12. Marriage Bonds.

1 Corinthians 7:1-14. The Apostle first addresses the unmarried, v. 1, etc. He speaks elsewhere reverently of marriage, Eph. 5:23. Forbidding to marry is in his judgment a symptom of apostasy, 1 Tim. 4:1-3. His recommendations here were evidently due to the special circumstances of that difficult and perilous time. The loftiest conception of marriage is the wedding of two souls, each of which has found its affinity; the Apostle is treating here the only conception of marriage entertained by these recent converts from paganism. He deals with them on their own level, with the determination of ultimately leading them to view marriage from Christ's standpoint. It is often well to fast from lawful things, that we may surrender ourselves more absolutely to the Spirit of God.

In addressing the married, v. 10, etc., Paul is not dealing with the formation of marriage ties; they are settled by 2 Cor. 6:14. He is deciding what course shall be followed, when either a husband or a wife has become a Christian, the other remaining unchanged. He decides that the Christian should not separate, so long as the unbelieving partner is willing to continue their life together.

13. Serve God in Your Calling.

1 Corinthians 7:15-24. There was much unsettlement in regard to marriage in the church at Corinth. An unnatural asceticism was showing itself in some quarters and a lawless self-indulgence in others. Against these tendencies Paul resolutely set himself. While he held that marriage should be contracted only in the Lord, he also taught that where it had been

consummated it should not be dissolved at the instance of the Christian, though the wish of the unbelieving partner might be acceded to. Children, also, born when one of their parents was a heathen, might be reckoned clean.

The Apostle refers both to vocation and to the Christian life as a divine calling, vs. 18-24. We are all called to our trade or profession as much as a student is to the ministry. It is interesting that a man will speak of his business as his *calling*. God has a purpose for each of us, and summons us to fulfill it. Unless we are specially led to do otherwise, we should, on entering the Christian life, remain in the same calling in which our former life was spent. The only difference is that we are to stay in it with God, v. 24. In every service, however lowly, we should have an eye toward Christ. All may be done in him, with him, for him.

14. Counsel for Times of Emergency.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40. The *virgin* here referred to is probably the young woman who was engaged to be married, and the counsel is expressly defined to be advice, and given only under the pressure of the times, when the dissolution of all things seemed at hand. It seemed wiser not to enter upon matrimony because everything was in flux, but no sin was contracted if marriage took place, so long as it was *only in the Lord*, v. 39. As pilgrims we should hold all earthly things but lightly, v. 30.

The allusion of v. 31 is to the shifting scenery of a theater. The fashion of the age is like the ever-changing moving-picture films that flash before the audience and cannot be arrested or recalled. Surely the unmarried among us should ponder carefully the recommendations of vs. 32-34, the first of which refers to the man and the second to the wife. Where both are Christians, however, surely there may be union in caring for the things of the Lord, that the great cause of his Kingdom may be expedited rather than hindered. But everything in this chapter, as well as the general

New Testament teaching, emphasizes the absolute importance of marriage being *only in the Lord*, v. 39.

15. Consideration for Others' Weakness.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13. It was the heathen custom of the time to present for blessing in the idol temples the food that was sold and bought in public marketplaces. A grave question arose, therefore, as to whether the Christian convert might partake of such food without blame. Paul took a broad and common-sense view of the situation. He declared there is only one God and that an idol is an absolute nonentity. Therefore it was a matter of perfect indifference what the heathen butchers might have done before they exposed their meat for sale. At the same time if some weaker brother were really thrown back in his Christian life by seeing his fellow-believer eating in a heathen temple, that in itself would at once be a sufficient reason why the stronger should abstain for the weaker brother's sake. There are many things which, so far as we personally are concerned, we might feel free to do or permit, but which we must avoid if they threaten to hinder the practice or divert the course of some fellow-Christian.

16. Rights and Their Surrender.

1 Corinthians 9:1-15. Paul's claim to an equality with Peter and the other Apostles was violently disputed by his enemies at Corinth, because in several matters he differed from them. Unlike Peter, he had no wife to support, and he worked for his livelihood, instead of being supported by the churches. In this chapter he strongly asserts his rights in this particular; but he is equally strong in saying that he had refused to avail himself of his right, that he might influence a wider circle of men. He was a soldier, a vineyard-keeper, a shepherd, and could claim his maintenance. But he desired to be free from the slightest imputation of self-seeking. He knew that jealous critics were

watching his every action and seeking to weigh his secret motives. These were the very men he desired to win, and for their sakes he voluntarily surrendered his undoubted rights.

What a lesson for all of us and especially for those who are called to be ministers of Christ's gospel! We must be above suspicion. If we do or permit anything that might prove a hindrance to the acceptance of Christ by others, we must forego it, though reasonable in itself, that we may win them to our Saviour.

17. "Under Bondage to All."

1 Corinthians 9:16-27. Paul's one aim was to *gain men.* He uses the words repeatedly. To gain one more for his Lord, he would forego comfort, emolument, and well-earned repose. He would allow no competitor for an earthly prize to supersede himself in his sacrifices for this crown of rejoicing. He points to the denials, the hard training, and the severe discipline to which men who took part in the games subjected themselves. No one thought it strange that they should sacrifice so much for the chance of winning; why, then, should he be counted eccentric, who sought the certain reward of gaining new lovers of his Master's cross?

He tells us that he lived in constant dread of becoming a castaway. He had no fear of being rejected from God's love; but he feared lest God, who had used him so wonderfully, should cease to do so, and should cast him aside in favor of someone more unselfish, more pliant, more free from that which would excite prejudice. If Paul was so eager to surrender his rights and bruise his body that he might attain the prize of soul-winning, the question arises whether for our failure in these respects God may not be obliged to cast us on the rubbish-heap!

18. Learn from Bible History.

1 Corinthians 10:1-10. Twice over we are told that the story of the Exodus was intended for our instruc-

tion, vs. 6 and 11. It becomes us, therefore, to study the account with the honest intention to obtain all the warning and suggestion that it is capable of yielding. The great lesson is human failure under the most promising circumstances. Here were people who had been brought out of the most terrible hardships and perils, who were under the greatest obligations to God, but who, in the hour of temptation, absolutely failed him.

Consider the privileges of the Chosen People. The cloud of divine guidance led them. The Red Sea, like a grave, lay between them and the land of bondage. They ate daily of the heavenly manna and drank of the water that gushed from the rock. But all these are types of spiritual blessings which await us in Christ. His grave lies between us and the world; his guidance is ours; we daily feed on his life and help. Let us take heed that we do not, like Israel, allow Moab to cast the witchery of sensual indulgence over us, lest we excite God's displeasure. Let us not tempt the Lord by murmuring or distrust. Let us ever live worthily of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

19. Have No Fellowship with Evil.

1 Corinthians 10:11-22. By *the end of the world* is meant the end of one great era and the beginning of another. The Jewish dispensation was passing, the Christian age coming. What gracious encouragement shines in v. 13! Our faithful God! The tempter must get permission before assailing us, Luke 22:32. No temptation is unprecedented, and as others have conquered so may we, Heb. 4:15. The pressure of temptation is always accompanied by a corresponding store of grace, if only our eyes were open to perceive it.

To abstain from idol feasts was the clear duty of all Christians. By partaking of heathen sacrifices which were offered to demons, they became one with the demons and their votaries; just as in the Lord's Sup-

per we show our oneness not only with the Saviour but with each other. It was clear, therefore, that the Corinthian Christians could not consistently partake of idol feasts and the Lord's Supper. What an incentive is given here to frequent and reverent participation in the Lord's Supper! It proclaims our union with him and his people, and it gives us a distaste for all that is alien to its spirit.

20. "Do All to the Glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1. There seems to be a clear distinction in the Apostle's directions between feasting in an idol temple on the one hand, and the acceptance of an invitation to a private house, as in vs. 25 and 27, on the other. The believer in Christ knew that an idol was nothing in itself, and the fact of food having been offered before a shrine did not make it better or worse. It was a common practice, and meant nothing so far as Christian disciples were concerned. But if an unbeliever were to make the meal a test of faith, by reminding believers that in partaking of such food they were implicitly partners in heathen rites, then there was no course but to refuse and abstain.

In every meal and act we must so conduct ourselves that praise and honor may redound to God. The thankful enjoyment of God's gifts of food, which constitutes the essence of a Christian meal, must always be subordinated to our consideration of the religious scruples of others; and we must avoid doing anything which would blunt and injure their faith. Though our intelligence may give us a wide liberty in regard to personal conduct, we must allow a check to be placed on it by the thoughtfulness of Christian love.

21. Covering the Head.

1 Corinthians 11:2-10. No soul is complete in itself. The man is not complete apart from Christ, as the woman is not complete apart from man. As God is the head of the nature of Jesus on its human side, so

must Jesus be head of man, and man of woman. But in each case the headship is not one of authority and rule, but of the impartation of resources of love, wisdom, and strength, without which the best cannot be realized. The covered head of woman in our sanctuaries as contrasted with the uncovered head of man is a sign and symbol of this interdependence.

But it is very interesting to notice that while the Gospel so clearly insists on the divine order, it has elevated woman to be man's true helpmeet, and has caused her to be honored and loved as the glory of man. Neither society, nor family life, nor woman herself, can be happy unless she attains her true position. On the one hand she finds her completion in man; on the other she is his queen and he ministers to her in all gentleness and tenderness and strength.

22. Unity and Order in Public Assembly.

1 Corinthians 11:11-22. The *power* on a woman's head in v. 10 probably refers to the veil or covering which the Grecian woman assumed at marriage as the sign that she was not free from the sacred ties and duties of wedlock. In Paul's thought of the matter, therefore, it was unseemly for the Christian matron to lay this aside. He conceded the absolute freedom and equality of male and female in Christ, and yet he stood for the observance of the best customs of the age, lest the gospel should be brought into disrepute. The women, therefore, must veil their heads in the Christian assemblies as the angels veil their faces in the presence of God.

The uncovered face of man is to the glory of God, but the covered face of woman recognizes that she finds her glory in her husband's love and care. Each is dependent on the other—the man on God, and the wife on her spouse. These precepts and reasons are somewhat foreign to modern thought, but at least we must notice that there was no subject too trivial—even the headdress—to be brought into subjection to Christ and

related to the great principle of his supreme headship and lordship.

23. Observing the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:23-34. There was much disorder in the Corinthian church, because the love-feast, which preceded the Holy Supper, was the scene of riot and conviviality, of ostentation and jealousy. In the love-feast of the early Church each brought his own supply of food, which was put into a common stock and shared by all alike; but at Corinth each family or group retained their own provisions, and a great distinction was thus made between rich and poor. This caused much heart-burning and was unworthy of Christians.

Note that the Apostle received the words of institution by direct revelation. The Lord's Supper is intended not only to commemorate the supreme act of Calvary, but to enable us spiritually to incorporate into ourselves the very life and death of Jesus, so that we may truly be crucified with him and nevertheless live. "That I may know him and the fellowship of his sufferings." We are liable to condemnation if we do not recognize the Body of Christ—that is, the Church—the unity of which is disturbed and obscured when there is dissension. If we judge ourselves, we escape the judgment and chastisement of the Almighty.

24. Differing Spiritual Gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11. Each believer, being an heir of God, has the *same amount of grace* placed to his credit in the heavenly bank, on which he can draw in time of need. This is the parable of the pounds. Each servant received the same amount. But there are *great diversities in the gifts* with which we are endowed. Some have five talents, others two, and large numbers only one. A full enumeration of these gifts is made in vs. 8-11, and it is a comfort to learn that to everyone something is allotted, vs. 7 and 11.

Notice that the allotment is made by the Holy Spirit

acting sovereignly as he will, v. 11. We are not informed when it is made—perhaps it is at the moment of our regeneration or adoption—but it is important to bear in mind that our gifts will probably correspond with our natural endowment. Hence our Lord tells us that to every man was given *according to his several ability*, Matt. 25:15.

Mark the allusion to the Divine Trinity: the same Spirit, v. 4; the same Lord, v. 5; the same God, v. 6. The Spirit directs, the Saviour is the channel of supply, and the Father is the fountain of all.

25. Many Members in One Body.

1 Corinthians 12:12-19. The use of gifts must never be dictated by personal ambition or the desire for selfish gain. As every member of the physical body is united to the head by two sets of nerves, the *afferent*, which bring to the brain the slightest sense impressions, and the *efferent*, which bear to the extremities the commands of the mind, so is every member of the Church, even the feeblest and most distant, bound to his glorious Lord. The head of the swimmer is in one element—the air—and the members may be in another—the water—yet the head is able to control and co-ordinate them; so with the unseen Christ and his visible Church on earth. He must direct and use us. We have nothing to do with the work he confides to others, and must concentrate on that which he wants to achieve through us. If this means co-operation with other members or service to them; if it means hidden obscurity or temporary disuse, we must be equally content. It is for him to do as he will. There is no room for envy or jealousy; they must give place to loving fellowship and mutual help, and the quiet peace and rest which come from recognizing the good pleasure of the Creator.

26. Each Contributing His Part.

1 Corinthians 12:20-31. The hand and the foot obviously stand in need of each other; but the same inter-

dependence marks the feebler and humbler parts of our frame. Indeed, it would appear as if we bestow more abundant honor on them by covering them with clothes or ornaments. In this way the least important parts of our nature are leveled up and compensated.

The Apostle's aim throughout this passage is to enforce the interdependence of believers. One gives to others that in which they are deficient, and he derives help from each of them in turn. The Christian Church is not an inert mass of mere learners and subjects who are to be authoritatively taught and ruled by a small fraction of its members. It is a great co-operative society, in which each is for all and all for each, and the object is to bring Christ into every department of our being and our fellowship, as the life-blood nourishes the body of man. A new word has lately come into use, to express the interdependence and mutual interests of men and nations; and nothing could more aptly describe the Apostle's ideal than that word *solidarity*.

27. The One Essential for All.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13. With what wonder his amanuensis must have looked up, as the Apostle broke into this exquisite sonnet on love! His radiant spirit had caught a glimpse of the living Saviour. Jesus sits for his portrait in these glowing sentences, and of him every clause is true. Substitute his name for *love* throughout the chapter, and say whether it is not an exact likeness. With Paul *love* stands for that strong, sustained, and holy subordination of self for others, which begins in will and act and is afterward suffused by emotion, as a cloud lying in the pathway of the rising sun. But if you want the divine love, you must get it after the manner of the bay which opens its bosom to the incoming tide. God is love, and if you would love, you must abide in him and he in you. Love is better than miracles, gifts, or philanthropy, vs. 1-3. Love is the parent of all that is most delightful in the moral sphere, vs. 4-7. Love is the best of all,

because it is eternal. All else will perish. Our highest attainments will be as the babblings and playthings of childhood. But when we are in touch with the reality of things, love will be all in all.

28. The Gift of "Prophesying."

1 Corinthians 14: 1-12. The word *prophesy* is used here, as so largely in Scripture, not in the limited sense of foretelling the future, but of pouring forth heaven-given speech. There was a strong tendency at Corinth to magnify the use of tongues; that is, forms of utterance which the assembly could not understand. The Apostle rebukes this, and says that it is far better to be able to speak to the edification of the hearers. Indeed, he directs that speech in an unknown tongue should be withheld, unless someone were present who could explain and interpret it.

The gift of tongues was a special sign intended for the convincing of that age, but it was not a necessary accompaniment of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and is certainly of inferior value. A mere blare of a trumpet, without note or modulation, conveys no meaning to the waiting ranks of soldiers; and the mere sound of an unknown tongue startles without teaching. Do not be content merely to make a sound; *say something.* Seek to do actual service to others is one of the three directions suggested in v. 3. Edification is the building up of the soul in truth. Comfort is for the distressed and weary. Consolation is the heartening of the soul to fresh enterprise.

29. Understanding Promotes Edifying.

1 Corinthians 14: 13-25. The Apostle here gives two practical directions, in order to restore the rule of the understanding above the babble of incoherent sounds, which was confusing the Corinthian church.

The *first* was that worship should be conducted in a form that the assembled congregation could understand. To utter prayer or thanksgiving to which the audience

THE DISPUTE AT ANTIOCH. Galatians 2:11-16.

From Painting by GUIDO RENI. Italian Artist.

could give no assent; to utter sounds which were meaningless, was inconsistent with the true nature of Christian worship. It was therefore from this chapter that the Reformers drew their arguments against the practice of conducting the services of the Church in Latin. The *second* was that instruction was a most necessary part of worship, v. 19.

The effect of prophesying, that is, preaching, is set forth very forcibly and beautifully in the closing verses of our reading. We must always have in mind the unbelieving and the unlearned. If he hears the solemn voice of God speaking through human lips to his conscience, stirring its depths, moving it to repentance and faith, he will bear speedy testimony to the truth of what he has heard. We must seek to have in our assemblies the convincing power of God's Word, accompanied by the corroborating witness of the unhindered Spirit.

30. Order of Church Services.

1 Corinthians 14: 26-40. Again the Apostle sums up his directions in two simple rules: 1. *Let all things be done unto edifying;* that is, to building up individual character, and to fitting each member as a brick or stone into the rising fabric of the Church. Hence the stress laid on prophesying or speaking under the impulse of God's Spirit. All who had that gift should certainly have a chance to use it, because the whole Church would be thereby profited and enriched. *2. *Let all things be done decently and in order: decently,* so as not to interrupt the dignity and gravity of the services; *in order,* not by hazard or impulse, but by design and arrangement.

The Apostle's ideal is that of the calm and simple majesty which should mark all solemn assemblies, as distinct from fanatical and frenzied excitement. Hence he discountenances the disuse of the Eastern veil (the badge of modesty), the speaking of women in public, and the interruption of speakers by each other. That the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets

is a truth of universal application. It condemns every impulse of a religious character which is not under the intelligent control of those who display it.

31. The Gospel: Christ Died and Rose Again.

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11. If the 13th chapter is a psalm of love, this chapter is a psalm of hope—a hope that cannot be ashamed. It is the most memorable argument in existence for the resurrection of the body. We need hardly stay to distinguish between this and the immortality of the soul. The former is distinctly a Christian teaching; the latter has been held by vast numbers outside of the Christian pale.

Notice that the Resurrection was primarily not a doctrine but a *fact*. It is not necessary to argue it, but simply to *say* that Christ arose, therefore all will arise, because Christ is the Son of man. Other religions rest on foundations of philosophy and metaphysics, but the empty grave in Joseph's garden is the keystone of the arch. If that cannot be maintained, as it was in the primitive Church, the whole superstructure crumbles like a mass of clouds. But it *can be* maintained. There is even more evidence for it than for any fact of modern history. Men may as soon refuse to believe in the battle of Waterloo as in our Lord's resurrection. The testimony of Paul is most important, because he knew all that could be alleged or argued against it by the Pharisees. Indeed, he had himself opposed it. Note that the words, *not I*, v. 10, are also in 1 Cor. 7:10 and Gal. 2:20.

32. Christ's Resurrection Assures Ours.

1 Corinthians 15:12-28. The argument here goes to show, first, that our resurrection is intimately connected with Christ's. There must be such a thing, because he, as the representative of humanity, arose from the dead, in a human body which, though more ethereal in its texture, was easily recognizable by those who had known him previously. Mary was recalled by the well-

known intonations of her Master's voice. Thomas was compelled to believe, in spite of his protestations to the contrary. In fact, all of our Lord's friends were convinced against themselves. They credited the tidings of the risen Lord as idle tales. Therefore, says the Apostle, it is far easier to admit that man will rise than to face the difficulties of a still buried Christ, a vain faith, a vain gospel, and a false testimony from so many accredited witnesses.

What a burst of music breaks forth in vs. 20-28! The first fruit sheaf is the forerunner and specimen of all the harvest. In Christ the whole Church was presented to God, and we may judge of the whole by him. Note the divine order in v. 23: first, Christ; then, his own; lastly, the end, when death itself shall be destroyed, all enemies conquered, and the kingdom of an emancipated universe finally handed back by the Mediator to the Father.

33. This Body the Seed of a Glorious One.

1 Corinthians 15:29-41. The anticipation of the final resurrection enabled the early Christians to endure incredible sufferings. As one rank fell martyred, another was ready to step into its place; and the *catechumens*, or young believers, took the names of the martyrs, so as to perpetuate their testimony. With this hope in his heart Paul himself had confronted at Ephesus the tumult of the infuriated mob, Acts 19. Belief in this sublime undoing of the last effects of sin was one of the chief features in the conquering power of Christianity.

In every seed there is the germ of a new and beautiful growth, more elaborate and yet identical; so in each of us there is something which has the capacity and potentiality of furnishing another body, through which the emancipated spirit will be able to express itself more perfectly than it can in this body, which is composed of coarser materials. It is not difficult to believe in this, when we have seen the caterpillar become the

butterfly. The world is full of wonderful and beautiful things. God's inventiveness reveals itself in a myriad differing organisms. It is by his will that the golden head of wheat is fairer than the little brown seed cast into the furrow; so it is his pleasure that the body which is to be shall surpass the present in glory.

34. Victory over Sin and Death.

1 Corinthians 15:42-58. Life on the other side will be as real and as earnest as here. We shall not dissolve into thin mist or flit as bodiless ghosts. We shall each be provided with a body like that which our Lord had after he arose from the dead. It will be a spiritual body, able to go and come at a wish or a thought; a body that will be perfectly adapted to its spiritual world environment. The last Adam, our Lord, will effect this for us. But we must in the meanwhile be content to make the best use of the discipline of mortality, keeping our body pure and sweet as the temple and vehicle of the Holy Spirit until we are born into the next stage of existence. Always the physical before the psychical and the psychical before the spiritual.

What triumph rings through those last four verses! As generations of Christians have stood around the mortal remains of their beloved, they have uttered these words of immortal hope. The trumpet's notes will call those who have died and the saints that are still alive on the earth, into one mighty host of transfigured and redeemed humanity. Oh, happy day! Then we shall be manifested, rewarded, and glorified with Christ. All mysteries solved, all questions answered! Till then let us abound always in the work of the Lord.

35. Systematic Beneficence.

1 Corinthians 16:1-12. It is remarkable that the Apostle can turn from one of his sublimest flights of sacred eloquence to deal with so ordinary a matter as the collection. But, after all, there is no incongruity.

The thoughts to which he has given expression should surely lead to some tangible response of Christian duty and activity, or they would injure rather than help. Nothing is more injurious to the Christian conscience than trumpet-sounding which leads to no response in action. If the foregoing chapter does not stimulate Christian generosity, nothing will.

Note *the time*—the first day of the week, indicating the reverence with which the early Christians regarded that day. *The method*—the definite appropriation for God's work of a certain proportion of income, as it accrues. *The proportion*—as the giver may be prospered. Paul disliked vehement collection appeals, and advised that we should give according to a system, and not merely by impulse.

Remember it is God who opens great and effectual doors before his servants. It is of no use to force them. Let us wait for the Lord Jesus, who has the key of David, to open them, for then none can shut. Our duty is to be prepared to enter when the moment comes and the door swings wide.

36. Exhortations and Salutations.

1 Corinthians 16:13-24. The Apostle was careful to cultivate friendship, one of the priceless gifts of God; and he was very generous not only in his references to his friends, but also in his dealings with them. Because Timothy was deficient in virile strength, Paul was always contriving to make his way easier; and though Apollos had drawn away some of his converts, the Apostle was desirous for him to visit Corinth again. Nor could he forget the household which had yielded him the first fruits. His solitude had been greatly cheered by the advent of the Corinthian deputation. Human love is a revelation of the divine; an earthen pitcher which God fills with heavenly treasure; a chalice holding the wine of life.

Notice the flaming forth of Paul's passionate love for Christ. He felt that any who failed to love him must

be accursed in disposition and soul; and would be accursed at his coming, like the barren tree standing in the midst of an orchard of fruit trees, crowned with blossom or heavy with fruit. *Maran atha!*—our Lord cometh. He will put right the wrongs of time, and crown his faithful servants with honor and glory. Hallelujah!

(For Review Questions see next page.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

OUTLINE.

(*a*) How does this Epistle show that the gospel is the *power* of God?

(*b*) How does the writer show more than human wisdom in handling difficult problems?

INTRODUCTORY.

(*c*) Why was Corinth an important city?

(*d*) How was Christianity first introduced there?

(*e*) What was the occasion of this letter? By what special features is it characterized? When was it written?

SECTIONS 1–36. CHAPTERS 1–16.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. What unfavorable news had Paul heard concerning the church at Corinth?
2. How did the Jews object to the gospel? The Greeks? To whom is it the power of God?
3. What is Christ Jesus made unto us?
4. Why does the natural man not receive the things of the Spirit of God?
5. Under what figure does Paul describe his own work and that of Apollos?
6. What is the one foundation upon which all must build? What is the meaning of the saying, "All things are yours"?
7. When shall each man have his praise from God? How did Paul's condition differ from that of the Corinthian church?
8. Why had Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthians?
9. With what bread should we keep the new passover?
10. How should differences between Christians be settled?
11. Why should we glorify God in our bodies?

12. What is Paul's counsel to the Corinthians concerning marriage?
13. What bearing does the Christian life have upon one's station or calling?
14. Why did Paul apparently discourage marriage among the Corinthians?
15. What regard must we have for those of weak conscience?
16. On what grounds could Paul claim his maintenance from the churches? Why did he decline to do so?
17. What was Paul's one aim? What dread haunted him?
18. What purpose is served by the study of Bible history?
19. Why is it never necessary to succumb to temptation?
20. What should be the end of our daily living?
21. Why should the man's head be uncovered, and the woman's covered in the sanctuary?
22. What abuses prevailed in the church in connection with the Lord's Supper?
23. What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
24. What different gifts are bestowed by the Spirit?
25. How does the physical body illustrate the life of the Church?
26. What various functions are necessary to the life of the Church?
27. What is the source of the inspiration of 1 Corinthians 13? How may the gift of love be ours?
28. What directions did the Apostle give concerning speaking with tongues?
29. To whom are tongues a sign?
30. Why did Paul forbid women to speak in public?
31. What different appearances of the risen Christ are cited in 1 Corinthians 15?
32. Why is the resurrection of Christ fundamental to the Christian faith?
33. How does Paul answer objections to the resurrection?
34. How is the resurrected life contrasted with this life?
35. What is the right system of Christian beneficence?
36. With what exhortations does the Epistle close?

IV

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

THE GLORY OF THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

SALUTATION ..... 1:1, 2.

I. A CAREER OF TRIUMPH IN CHRIST .... 1—7.

1. *Thanksgiving Because of Good News from Corinth* ..... 1:3–7.
2. *Paul's Deliverance from an Affliction unto Death* ..... 1:8–11.
3. *His Sincerity in All His Dealings with the Corinthians* ..... 1:12—2:11.
4. *The Vindication of His Authority*. 2:12—3:18.
5. *The Character of His Ministry*... 4:1—6:17.
6. *His Good Courage Toward the Corinthians* ..... 7:1–16.

II. THE OFFERING FOR THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM ..... 8, 9.

1. *The Liberality of the Macedonian Churches* ..... 8:1–6.
2. *"Complete the Doing"* ..... 8:7–15.
3. *Titus and Paul's Other Helpers* .. 8:16–24.
4. *The Motive for and Reward of Benevolence* ..... 9.

III. THE APOSTLE'S FINAL VINDICATION.. 10—13

1. *His Standing with the Corinthians* 10:1—11:15.
2. *His Labors, Sufferings and Spiritual Experience* ..... 11:16—12:13.
3. *Announcement of a Third Visit* .. 12:14—13: 10.

CONCLUSION ..... 13:11–14.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

Titus had been commissioned by the Apostle to go from Ephesus to Corinth to enforce the instructions of the first Epistle. See 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6. For some reason his return had been delayed, a circumstance that caused Paul great anxiety. In the meanwhile the tumult at Ephesus had compelled the Apostle to leave that city, and he went to Troas to await his friend. When Titus did not arrive, Paul went on to Macedonia, where they met.

On the whole, the report was encouraging. The majority in the Corinthian church had accepted Paul's instructions and had acted upon them. They were for the most part tenderly attached to him, though a party still resisted his authority, demanded letters of commendation from Jerusalem, accused him of vacillation, and boasted their pure Hebrew descent. It was largely for these that the Epistle was prepared; but we may be thankful for the criticisms which called it into existence. It is an unrivaled revelation of tenderness, self-sacrifice, and triumphant hope.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. Sharing Comfort in Affliction.

2 Corinthians 1:1-11. This was a circular letter, including in its scope all the scattered communities in the district. *Grace* was the usual salutation of the West, *Peace* of the East. Here they meet. All our mercies emanate from the Father's heart, and all comfort comes from the Comforter. When next passing through great sorrow and trial, notice how near God comes and what he says. Try to learn his methods, to get his secret. Remember that you are being comforted in order to comfort others. God is training you to be, like Barnabas, a "son of consolation." The gains of trial are immense, because they furnish the experience from which others may profit. Often God ministers comfort by sending a friend, 2 Cor. 7: 5-7.

Either through persecution or through severe illness Paul had been brought to the gates of death, v. 8. His recovery was little less than a miracle, but throughout his trust never wavered. Dare to believe, like Paul, that God has delivered, doth deliver, and will deliver! Past, present, and coming deliverances blend in this sweet verse. What he hath done, he doth now, and will do. Only see to it that you have the sentence of death *in* yourself, and *on* yourself, and that you go *out of* yourself to God, in whom is all necessary help. In such hours we may also receive great help from the faith of our friends, v. 11.

2. Sincere Like His Master.

2 Corinthians 1:12-22. The Apostle laid great emphasis on the witness of his conscience. See Acts 23:1; 24:16. As we pass out of this life, and stand in the revealing dawn of eternity, it will be a blessed thing if we are able to say this much of ourselves.

Paul had thought of visiting Corinth on his way to Macedonia, and again on his return journey; but this purpose had been defeated. He was eager, however, that his friends should understand that the change was not due to vacillation on his part, for this would be unworthy of one who stood for the great certainties of the gospel.

Christ is God's attestation to his promises. All these have received their seal in the words, *sufferings* and *resurrection* of our Lord. In Jesus God says *Yea* to the yearnings and prayers of human hearts, and *Amen* (verily) to all the ten thousand promises of Scripture. He who rests on Christ stands in the focal point of certainty and assurance. Not one good thing shall fail him of all that has been promised.

Verse 21 is full of comfort. God alone can give us a settled and established position. He anoints us for service; seals us with his Spirit for safety, likeness, and authentication; and in this way gives us the earnest and foretaste of heaven, as the grapes of Eschol were the pledge and foretaste of Canaan.

3. Tender-hearted and Forgiving.

2 Corinthians 1:23—2:11. In these opening words Paul evidently refers to the sin mentioned in 1 Cor. 5. His judgment had been strong and stringent, the Corinthian church had acted upon it, and the offender had suffered severely in consequence. But the result had been more than satisfactory. He had repented with great brokenness of spirit. Indeed, it seemed as if he would be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, v. 7.

The Apostle desires the Corinthians to understand that he also had shed many tears over the case, v. 4. His was a very affectionate and tender disposition, which shrank from inflicting pain, and yet was resolute at all costs to maintain truth. We get a sidelight here as to the heart of God. May we not believe that whenever he chastens us, it is with profound pity? Whom he loves he chastens; and whom he receives, he scourges.

But when there is full and frank repentance, there should be forgiveness. The penitent offender was to be restored to church fellowship and received with brotherly welcome. The Saviour himself speaks through forgiveness. It is his love that moves, his voice that declares; while an unforgiving spirit sets an open door to the entrance of Satan.

4. The Savor of the Knowledge of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:12—3:6. Paul, in vs. 14-16, imagines himself as part of his Master's procession passing through the world. First he is a captive in Christ's conquering train; then he is one of the incense-bearers, scattering fragrant perfume; then he conceives of his life as being in itself that perfume. As the captives in a triumphal procession would be divided into two bodies, of which one company was doomed to die while the other was spared, so inevitably all who come in contact with Christ, either directly in the preaching of the gospel or indirectly in the lives of his people, are influenced either for evil or for good.

The Apostle fancies himself challenged to furnish letters of commendation and he repudiates the claim. "No," he cries, "the lives and testimonies of those whom I have won for God, are all the credentials that I require!" Every Christian should be a clearly written and legible tractlet, circulating for the glory of God. Men will not read the evidences for Christianity as contained in learned treatises, but they are keen to read *us*. God alone can suffice us to sustain this searching scrutiny.

5. The Veil upon the Heart.

2 Corinthians 3:7-18. By a quick turn of thought, Paul passes from the idea of the fleshly tablets of the heart, where God writes his new name, to the Law graven on the ancient tables of stone, and to the Lawgiver, stern and veiled. He argues that if the glory which shone on the face of Moses was so beautiful,

surely that of the gospel must be transcendently so. The one is transient, the other abiding; the one is reflected, the other direct.

Not only was Moses veiled, but the hearts of the Jews were covered with a thick covering of prejudice. They did not understand the inner significance of the Levitical Code; and when the Law was read, they listened to it without spiritual insight. Directly men turn to Christ, they see the inner meaning of Scripture. What liberty becomes ours when we live in Christ! We are free to love, to serve, to know, and to be. Note v. 18! We may gaze on the unveiled face of God in Christ. The more we look the more we resemble. The more we endeavor to reflect him, in doing what he desires, the more certainly and inevitably we become like him. Only remember that in all things we are deeply indebted to the gracious influence of the Spirit. He produces the Christ-life in us.

6. God's Glory Reflected in Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6. The servant of Christ must never forget that he once needed and obtained mercy. This will sustain him in many an hour when heart and flesh fail. His weapon is the truth, his appeal to conscience. Others may vie with him in brilliant imagination, fervid enthusiasm, and intellectual force, but he has unrivaled supremacy in the realm of conscience. As Richard I of England, immured in a castle-dungeon, recognized the voice and song of his troubadour, singing outside the castle gate a strain familiar to them both, and responded note for note, so does conscience awaken and respond to the truth, which it recognizes as the voice of God.

Why, then, does the gospel fail? Not through any defect in itself, nor because of some arbitrary decree on the part of God, but because the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the heart by the glamour of worldly prosperity and success, or perhaps by the covering film or scale of evil habit, so that the light of

the dawn, stealing over the world, is unable to penetrate the darkened life.

7. The Inward Life Triumphant over Affliction.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Few men have been more conscious of their weakness than was the Apostle. The earthen vessel had become very cracked and scratched, but the heavenly treasure was unimpaired, as in the case of Gideon, when the pitcher was broken the lantern shone out. Paul here confesses that he was troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down, always bearing the scars of Jesus, and being perpetually delivered over to death. But he gratefully accepted all these disabilities because he knew that they gave greater opportunities to Jesus to show forth, through him, his resurrection power. With the daily decay of the outward, there came the renewal of the unseen and spiritual. It is only in proportion as we are conformed to the sufferings and death of Christ that we begin to realize the fullness of what he is, and what he can be or do through us. Our one thought must always be, the glory of Christ in the salvation of others.

Note the contrasts of v. 17. The affliction is light, but the glory of the future is fraught with radiant and satisfying blessedness. The one is transient, the other eternal. The one is the price of the other, though each is the gift of God. The comet which has gone farthest into the outer darkness returns closest to the central sun.

8. Longing To Be "at Home with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:1-10. This mortal life is a pilgrimage, and our body is a tent, so slight, so transitory, so easily taken down; but what does it matter, since there is awaiting us a mansion prepared by God? Often in this veil of flesh we groan. It cages us, anchors us down to earth, hampers us with its needs, obstructs our vision, and becomes the medium of temptation. How

good it would be if our physical body could be suddenly transmuted into the glorified ethereal body which should be like the resurrection body of our Lord! It would be sweet to escape the wrench of death. But if not, then through death we shall carry with us the germ of the glorified body. That which shall be quickened will first die, but God will give it a body as it shall please him.

The gate of death may look gloomy on this side, but on the other it is of burnished gold, and opens directly into the presence-chamber of Jesus. We long to see him and to be with him; and such desires are the work of the Holy Spirit and the first fruits of heaven. But remember that just inside the door there is Christ's judgment seat, where he will adjudge our life and apportion our reward. Prepare, my soul, to give an account of thy talents!

9. Constrained by the Love of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:11-19. It was of small importance in Paul's eyes what his critics thought of him. He desired only to please his supreme Lord, whether he lived or died, was considered cold and staid or hot and impassioned. He was overmastered by his love of Christ. This may have been the sense of Christ's love to his unworthy self, or the emotion that burned in his soul toward Christ, or the very love of Christ received into his heart, as a tiny creek on the shore receives the pulse of the ocean tide.

The Apostle had arrived at the deliberate conclusion and judgment that the "all" who realized what Christ had done for them (and he among them) must live with as much devotion toward him as others toward themselves. A new world had been opened by Christ's resurrection. All things had become new. Let us live in daily touch with that world of faith and glory, refusing to be judged by the old standards. It is clear that the reconciliation of the world is as complete as

God can make it, but it is for us to urge men to fall in with and accept God's proposals.

10. Ambassadors for Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:10. On God's side the work of reconciliation is complete. Everything has been done and is in readiness to make forgiveness and justifying righteousness possible as soon as a penitent soul asks for them. He only waits for us to make application for our share in the atonement of Calvary. Many as our trespasses have been, they are not reckoned to us, because they were reckoned to Christ. God wants this known, and so from age to age sends out ambassadors to announce these terms and urge men to accept them.

God sends none forth to entreat men without cooperating with them. When rain falls on a slab of rock, it falls in vain. Be not rock, but loam to the gentle fall of God's grace. Let none of us be stumbling-blocks by the inconsistencies of our character, but all of us stepping-stones and ascending stairways for other souls.

The three marvelous series of paradoxes in vs. 4-10 deserve careful pondering. The *first* series enumerates Paul's sufferings on behalf of the Gospel; the *second*, his behavior under them; the *third*, the contrast between appearance and reality, as judged respectively by time and eternity. The stoic bears life's sorrows with compressed lips; the Christian, with a smile. Let us be always rejoicing, many enriching, and all things possessing.

11. Separate from All Uncleanness.

2 Corinthians 6:11—7:4. Paul's love failed to be appreciated by his converts because the channel of receptiveness, that is, of their faith and love, was so straitened. How often is this the case between Christ and us! Let us dredge the channel. Be ye enlarged! Open your mouth wide and he will fill it.

The best method of doing this is to be only, always,

and all for him. We must not offer him a *share* of our heart and devotion. There must be no division between him and others. Whenever iniquity, darkness, Belial, and unbelievers seek to share our nature with the Holy Spirit, and we permit the partnership, he withdraws. No idols must be permitted in any hidden shrine of the heart. The whole nature—*spirit* (that is, the Holy of Holies) *soul* (that is, the seat of our individuality), and *body*—must be the temple of the Eternal, who rules it from the Shekinah, which is enthroned on the Ark of the Covenant. God still walks the world in those who love him and are wholly yielded to his indwelling. The loneliest spirit finds him to be father, mother, brother, sister, all. What an incentive to cleanliness not only of flesh but of spirit! Heb. 10:22. The Apostle concludes by expressing his intense thankfulness that his converts had not misunderstood the urgency of his former letter.

12. The Joyous Effect of Godly Sorrow.

2 Corinthians 7:5-16. After dispatching his first Epistle, with the strong words of chapter 5 and elsewhere, Paul's tender heart had been rent with anxiety lest the Corinthian church should resent its terms and be alienated from his friendship. But when Titus joined him in Macedonia, bringing the assurance of their deep repentance and unabated affection, he was profoundly comforted and gladdened. He felt also that their sorrow was of the true and genuine sort, which does not consist of mere mortification at being found out or of the dread of punishment, but which implies a profound hatred of sin as grieving the Holy Saviour and unworthy of his precious blood. *This* sorrow does not need to be repented of; *these* tears do not require to be cleansed. Godly sorrow accepts rebuke meekly, puts away the wrong, and with chastened steps comes again into the way of the sacred Cross.

Titus had imbibed much of Paul's spirit. It is interesting to notice that though he was a companion

and messenger of the Apostle, even his spirit could be in need of refreshment, v. 13; and Paul was pleased that his own anticipations had been realized in the response of his friends at Corinth. Here beats the heart of a true pastor, whose whole soul is wrapped up in the interests of his charge!

13. Stimulating to Liberality.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Surely the plea for a generous gift of money toward the collection which Paul was making for the poor saints in Jerusalem, could not have been more tenderly and convincingly urged than it is urged here. He begins by mentioning the generosity of the Christians in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berœa, who were very poor, the inference being that the wealthier Corinthians would make similar sacrifices. He quotes the example of the Lord Jesus, who made himself poor that they might be enriched and who for nineteen centuries since has had the joy of enriching myriads of souls. Paul reminds the Corinthians that a year ago they had resolved to make this gift. Finally he sketches his fair dream of reciprocity between church and church, so that wherever there was need the supplies of Christian benevolence should flow forth to meet it.

Notice, then, that Christian liberality originates in the grace of God, ministers abundant joy to those who give, is not staunched by deep poverty, begins with the consecration of the giver's soul to God, and does not wait to be entreated, because it demands the privilege of ministering thus to the lack of Christ's body.

14. "Things Honorable" Both to God and Men.

2 Corinthians 8:16-24. Those who handle the gifts of the Church should be extremely careful that all their financing be above the slightest suspicion. The Apostle shrank from handling these gifts himself, lest any should insinuate that he was appropriating them to his personal use. Even when we have no reason to

accuse ourselves in the sight of the Lord, we should be careful of appearances in the sight of men; and whatever is intrusted to us should be administered by us to the glory of God.

In the present instance the Apostle designated three brethren to attend to this matter. First, Titus, his partner and fellow-worker; next, the brother whose praise was in all the churches and who had been appointed for this very purpose; and thirdly, another brother, referred to in v. 22. Titus represented the Apostle, and the others represented the churches themselves. These brethren are distinctly mentioned as *the glory of Christ*, v. 23. It must be an encouragement to those who handle the financial matters of our churches, that they also may promote Christ's glory and participate in its transfiguring beauty.

15. "God Loveth a Cheerful Giver."

2 Corinthians 9:1-7. Paul evidently had considerable anxiety about the collection at Corinth for the starving saints at Jerusalem. He had started the idea, not merely because of his affection toward his own people, but in order to promote and foster the unity of the Church of Christ. There could be no greater evidence of the transforming power of the gospel than that it should obliterate the strongly-marked differences between East and West, between Jew and Gentile, and make it clear that Christ is all in all. Paul does not, therefore, urge and entreat the Corinthians so much as he reminds them of his confidence in their response. No motive is so potent as the sense that a worthy response is expected of us by one whom we revere and love.

He likens money-giving to seed-sowing. What was placed in the collection box would assuredly return to the giver with large increase. Christians, therefore, should not give grudgingly, or of necessity, but freely, spontaneously, generously, as the farmer, who does not hesitate to dip his hand deeply into his granaries, ex-

pecting, as he does, that every additional atom of grain scattered will come back to him augmented certainly to thirty-fold and perhaps to a hundred-fold. You will meet again somewhere and sometime every coin that you have given with a pure heart.

16. Enriched unto Liberality.

2 Corinthians 9:8-15. We are not really poorer by what we give away; and God will never starve his own almoners. Note the comprehensiveness of v. 8. God's grace is like an ocean at full tide. Count the *alls*: *all* grace, *always*, *all* sufficiency, *every* good work, and twice the verb *abound*. When you are going forth to sow, ask God to give you the seed. When after sowing you are hungry, ask God to supply you with bread. When you are discouraged at the results, ask God to increase the fruit. We sow the seed, whether of the gospel, or of money to aid its circulation, and lo! we reap a harvest of thanksgiving to God and of love to those who have given. But who can ever measure the thanks and love which are due to God for having given the Gift that includes all gifts! But have we accepted it? Do we use it?

Remember to look to God for your own supplies of spiritual nourishment, and specially for your seed of thought or money, of word or act. Leave the increase with him. Hold all that God has given you as a trustee holds property for others. Administer God's good gifts, giving people continual cause to glorify and praise him for your exhibition of the essential nature of his holy gospel.

17. Mighty with Spiritual Weapons.

2 Corinthians 10:1-7. Paul here makes his defense. Some who resisted his authority spoke disparagingly of his weak body and uneloquent speech. Why should they yield so absolute a submission to his words? Others suggested that he was little better than a schemer for his own ends, and that he walked after

worldly maxims, v. 2. There is considerable comfort to others who are placed in the driving storm of adverse criticism, to know that this great saint passed by the same road. Be of good cheer, comrade, if you are misunderstood and maligned! It is best to leave these reproaches with your Lord. He will shield and vindicate you. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn," Isa. 54:17.

In reply Paul quotes the spiritual results that have accrued from his ministry, and argues that they attest the purity and spirituality of his methods. He could not have attained to such great usefulness, if his motives had been those which his enemies imputed. What a lesson v. 4 contains! In the gospel there are weapons which no human reasonings or workings can withstand; but we too often trust carnal methods, and do not avail ourselves of this invincible panoply.

18. Enlarging One's Sphere of Influence.

2 Corinthians 10:8-18. There is marvelous power in the weakest of men, when governed by a single purpose and filled with the consciousness and the power of God. Weak and contemptible in themselves, they are often the chosen channels through which God pours his living water. Any child could have destroyed Raphael's brush, but in his hand it painted immortal pictures. Incidentally the Apostle remarks that some who criticized him bore themselves proudly, because their standard was so low. A five-foot man thinks himself tall when he compares himself with a dwarf! Always compare what is worst in yourself with what is best in others, and you will be kept humble.

Paul was always pressing outward to the fields that lay beyond. These were vast unoccupied regions, which he coveted to count as provinces in the Kingdom of Christ. This is the supreme test of a man. It is comparatively easy to build on foundations laid by an-

other Christian worker, and to win away his converts. Such conduct is mean and cowardly. Open up new ground and show the stuff that's in you. The Apostle was justified in making these affirmations, but he did so in the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

19. "A Godly Jealousy."

2 Corinthians 11:1-9. As the Bridegroom's friend, Paul was eager to bring the Corinthian church to the Bridegroom of souls. But false teachers disturbed the purity and simplicity of their faith, as in Eden Satan perverted Eve. There would have been excuse if these false teachers had given his converts another and a better Saviour or a greater Pentecost; but since these were impossible, he was well able to hold his ground, even though they were pre-eminent apostles in their own estimation. Paul was very conscious of the rudeness of his speech, of which apparently he had many reminders, but he was equally conscious of the direct knowledge that God had imparted to him.

He acknowledges that he had not taken their pecuniary support, which in itself was quite legitimate; but he altogether denies the inference which his enemies drew, that therefore he admitted his inferiority to the other servants of the Cross. He answers that insinuation by saying that he expressly refrained from accepting gifts, because of his desire to rob his critics of their argument that he was evangelizing the world for the purpose of making money. That they should make such wanton suggestions proved that they were Satan's emissaries.

20. Constrained To Silence Boasters.

2 Corinthians 11:10-21. In vivid language, which proves how greatly he had been moved, the Apostle contrasts the false teachers who were injuring his converts with himself. They brought their disciples under bondage, exalted themselves, and lived in self-indulgence. He did not hesitate to unveil their true character

and to designate them as emissaries of Satan. We need to fear a white devil even more than a black one. Satan conceals his deeds under the guise of an angel clothed in light; and as it is with him, so with his instruments; as their deeds are, so will be their end.

In the succeeding category, vs. 16-21, Paul confesses freely that his words might seem in conflict with the humility that Jesus taught, and might savor of boastfulness and pride; but for the sake of the truth he stooped to the level of these false teachers, and adopted their own methods. Though he would not think of plundering or of smiting the disciples as these intruders did, yet he would meet the latter on their own ground. The proverb says, "Answer a fool according to his folly," and this is an exact description of the Apostle's defense. This much at least was clear: that the motive of his life was absolutely pure and selfless, and was capable of lifting him to a career of unparalleled heroism.

21. Pre-eminent in Labor and Suffering.

2 Corinthians 11:22-33. It has been truly said that this enumeration represents a life which up to that hour had been without precedent in the history of the world. Self-devotion at particular moments or for some special cause had been often witnessed before; but a self-devotion involving such sacrifices and extending over at least fourteen years, in the interests of mankind at large, was up to that time a thing unknown. The lives of missionaries and philanthropists in later times may have paralleled his experiences; but Paul did all this, and was the first to do it.

The biography of the Apostle, as told by Luke, comes greatly short of this marvelous epitome. Of the facts alluded to only two—the stoning and one of the Roman scourgings—are mentioned in the book of the Acts; from which we gather that the book is, after all, but a fragmentary record, and that the splendid deeds of the disciples and apostles of that first age will

be known only when the Lamb himself recites them from his Book. But even this enumeration omits all that the Apostle suffered after the writing of this Epistle, including, of course, the sufferings between his arrest and his appearance before Nero.

22. The Secret of Strength.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10. It is a sublime phrase—*a man in Christ.* We reach our full stature only when we are in him. We are but fragments of manhood until the true man is formed in us. Of course the presence of Jesus is always with us, but its manifestation is reserved for special emergencies, when it is peculiarly needed. It is thought that this supreme revelation was synchronous with Paul's stoning at Lystra, Acts 14. While the poor body was being mangled, his spirit was in the third heaven, that is, in Paradise. What a contrast between being let down in a basket and being caught up into glory! How indifferent to the derisions of men is the soul that lives in God!

We do not know what this thorn, or stake, was—whether eye trouble, or imperfect utterance, or some deformity in appearance—but it was the source of much suffering and many temptations. At first Paul prayed for its removal, but as soon as he learned that its continuance was the condition of receiving additional grace, he not only accepted it, but even gloried in its presence. May we not believe that all disabilities are permitted to drive us to realize and appropriate all that Jesus can be to the hard-pressed soul!

23. "I Seek Not Yours, but You."

2 Corinthians 12:11-21. "The long burst of passionate self-vindication has now at last expended itself," says Dean Stanley, and Paul returns to the point whence he diverged at 10:7, where he was avowing his intention to repress the disobedience of those who still resisted his authority at Corinth. "Now," he says, "my folly is over. That I should have indulged

in it is your fault, not mine.'' What a comfort it is that he lays such repeated stress on his weakness! Instead of complaining of it, he used it as an argument with Christ that he should put forth more grace, and as an argument with his converts, that the results of his work had been granted as the divine endorsement of his apostolate.

Paul felt that his paternal relation to this church gave him the right to rebuke them, as a father rebukes his children. But he realized that they did not reciprocate his love, probably because they permitted the evil things enumerated in the closing verses. Often moral obliquity accounts for the decline and failure of love. Among other things, they had even accused him of getting money, if not directly, yet through Titus. But there were worse things still that needed to be dealt with, vs. 20, 21. Would that we were more often humbled to the dust by the sins of our brethren!

24. "Prove Your Own Selves."

2 Corinthians 13:1-6. Once more Paul refers to the charge that his ministry was characterized by weakness. This deeply wounded him. He admitted that in his personal appearance and speech he might be all that his enemies averred, but he contended that weakness did not count when married to the divine. Was not Christ weak when he was crucified? yet through that cross he has exerted his mighty saving power upon myriads! Through the weakness of death he passed to the right hand of power and bestowed the pentecostal gift. Suppose, then, that the servant shared the weakness of his Lord, might not the divine power work through his poor, weak nature as through the Lord himself? Let us not always be dwelling on our weakness and limitations; did not the divine fire tremble around the poor shrub of the wilderness?

Paul goes on to urge the Corinthians to prove—that is, to test—themselves by reminding them that unless they are reprobate, the Lord Jesus is truly and liter-

ally dwelling within them. This is the fundamental fact in a holy life. When we open our hearts, he enters, and becomes in us the Life of his life and the Light of all our seeing.

25. How To Be Built Up.

2 Corinthians 13:7-14. None can really injure the truth or stop its victorious progress. As well try to stop the sunrise. We often help others most in our weakness, because then we rely most on the Spirit of God. It is the noblest end of life to build up others through our own expenditure, even to the draining of our strength and resources. The world is apt at destruction; and indeed not much art is required for pulling down. But the divine work is to build; we have God's authority for that.

The valedictory address is very touching. *Be perfected*, v. 11, R.V., is really "be adjusted," "properly jointed," "articulated." God desires to set us as a skilful surgeon sets a dislocated limb. Let him do it; let the Comforter comfort; let love and peace enter with the Holy Dove; and see that the inner atmosphere does not hinder the gracious healing work of the Spirit of God.

Note the threefold benediction, which maintains the doctrine of the Trinity, v. 14. The love of the Father is the fountain of all; the grace of the Lord Jesus is the channel for all; while the communion of the Holy Spirit brings us into partnership with the aims and resources of God. The salutation of the saints and the divine benediction are the worthy close of this noble letter.

(*For Review Questions see next page.*)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

OUTLINE.

(*a*) Why does Paul in this Epistle reveal personal experiences more fully than elsewhere?
(*b*) Why was he so much concerned about this offering for the Jerusalem Christians?

INTRODUCTION.

(*c*) Why had Titus been sent to the church at Corinth?
(*d*) What report did Paul receive from him?
(*e*) For whom was this Second Epistle largely prepared? What qualities does it reveal?

SECTIONS 1–25. CHAPTERS 1–13.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. What affliction had befallen Paul in Asia? How had the Corinthians been endeared to him through this affliction?
2. How is Christ the Yea and Amen of all the promises of God?
3. Why had the First Epistle to the Corinthians cost Paul pain and effort?
4. What does the Apostle declare to be his true credentials?
5. What is the only key to the understanding of all Scripture?
6. Where is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God unveiled?
7. How does Paul contrast the inward and the outward man? the seen and the unseen?
8. What is the Christian's portion after death?
9. What is the "ministry of reconciliation"?
10. What sufferings did the Apostle have to endure as Christ's minister?
11. Why does the Christian life forbid all compromise?
12. What work is accomplished by godly sorrow?

13. How did Paul urge the Corinthians to generosity?
14. Why did the Apostle shrink from handling the gifts of the churches himself?
15. Why should all of our giving be done cheerfully and willingly?
16. How are we enriched by our liberality?
17. What are the weapons of the gospel?
18. What special credit could Paul claim as a Christian missionary?
19. What was his fear for the Corinthian church?
20. Why did Paul feel that he had the right to boast of his labors?
21. Through what dangers and sufferings had Paul passed as a Christian missionary? How did they further qualify him?
22. What special revelations had Paul enjoyed? What special affliction was laid upon him?
23. How does he express his tender solicitude for the Corinthian Christians?
24. How does Paul answer the charge that he was weak?
25. How could he rejoice when he was weak? With what benediction does the Epistle close?

V

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

GOSPEL LIBERTY AND LEGAL BONDAGE

SALUTATION ..... 1:1–5.

I. THE APOSTLE'S VINDICATION ..... 1:6—2:21.
1. *The Affront to His Authority* .... 1:6–10.
2. *His Commission God-given* ..... 1:11–17.
3. *His Recognition in the Church*.... 1:18—2:10.
4. *His Conflict with Cephas* ..... 2:11–21.

II. THE VINDICATION OF THE GOSPEL.... 3—6.
1. *The Folly of Reverting to Legalism* ..... 3:1–5.
2. *The Example of Abraham* ..... 3:6–29.
3. *The Covenants Contrasted* ..... 4.
4. *The Conflict of the Flesh and the Spirit* ..... 5.
5. *The Law of Christ* ..... 6:1–10.

CONCLUSION ..... 6:11–18.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatia was a province, occupying a central position in Asia Minor. It derived its name from the Gauls (tribes of Celts), who came thither from Europe. Jews resided there in large numbers, attracted by the opportunities for trade. Paul visited this region on his third missionary journey, Acts 18:23. His converts, composed of Jews and proselytes, manifested great eagerness and affection at first; but soon after the Apostle had left them, they fell an easy prey to the Judaizers, who wished to make the Mosaic ritual binding upon the Christian Church. These followed Paul's steps and made every effort to undermine his influence.

Their object in this was twofold:—first, to convince Jewish converts that Paul's authority was inferior to that of Peter and others who represented the more conservative element in the Church; and second, to insist upon Gentiles submitting to the rites of the ceremonial law. On receiving information of this invasion of the young church that he had founded, Paul wrote this urgent letter to the Galatians from Ephesus in A.D. 54, to vindicate his authority and to insist upon the all-sufficiency of Christ's redeeming work.

1. Danger from a Perverted Gospel.

Galatians 1:1-10. Note how strenuously Paul insists upon the genuineness of his call as an Apostle. It had come directly from the lips of Christ. *Neither by man, but by Jesus Christ,* v. 1. We who are redeemed have been lifted out of the present age, v. 4, into the next age, which may soon break forth in manifestation. It is now concealed, but it shall be unveiled. The age which preceded the fall of Jerusalem was notoriously corrupt. Speaking of the Jews at that time, Josephus says that they exceeded Sodom.

The false teachers who dogged Paul's footsteps suggested that *he* had only *one side* of the gospel, and that there was therefore abundant room for *their* statement of it. But this the Apostle indignantly repudiated, v. 8. No, he said; there *is* no gospel other than that which you have heard from my lips. These are solemn questions that each of us should ask: "What has been the effect of the gospel upon *my* life? Have *I* been redeemed out of the world that passes away, into that unseen and eternal kingdom of which my Lord is Center and Chief? Do I live according to the will of my God and Father?" v. 4.

2. The True Gospel a Revelation.

Galatians 1:11-17. When men belittle the Apostle's teaching as being purely Pauline, we should recall these strong statements, which attribute his knowledge of the gospel to the direct revelation of the Lord. He received from Christ himself that which he delivered to the Church. See also Acts 1:2. It was this that made his message authoritative.

What intensity of interest must have gathered for him about Mount Sinai, which doubtless was the objective of his journey into Arabia! Moses and Elijah

had been pupils before him in its majestic solitudes. As the Apostle dwelt there, with unlimited opportunity for communion with God, his mind was turned in the direction of that massive system of thought which at once distinguishes his Epistles and connects the New Testament with the Old. It is a profound discovery when God reveals his Son as resident in the believer's soul. That Christ is in each of us, if we be truly regenerated, is indubitable. See 2 Cor. 13:5. But it seems that, in many cases, a veil hides that blessed fact from our consciousness. We need a miracle of grace, similar to that which at the Crucifixion rent the veil in twain, from the top to the bottom, Matt. 27:51.

3. From Christ, Not from Men.

Galatians 1:18-24. Paul's first visit to Peter must have been of absorbing interest. Doubtless the two traversed together the holy scenes of the Lord's ministry, and Peter told the story of Gethsemane and Calvary with minute detail to ears that drank in every circumstance. How many inquiries would be addressed to the eyewitness of that sacred death and of the open grave! Paul was not ignorant of the facts, but wished to view them in the new light of faith and love. Such conversation as that which occupied these two souls gives us a glimpse of what may be expected when God's people are gathered into the many mansions of the Father's house.

The sudden termination of this visit to Jerusalem is described in Acts 9:28. Without delay Paul had to leave the city and start for his home in distant Tarsus, where he was to spend two or three years until the good Barnabas came to summon him to help in Antioch. See Acts 11:25, 26. Probably during this interval the Apostle began to evangelize the regions named in Gal. 1:21. Let *us* see to it that *we* receive no glory from man, but that men see God in us and us in God. We are nothing; he is all, and to him be the glory, Ps. 115:1.

FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
From Painting by JOHANN M. SCHRAMM. Modern German Artist.

4. Stand Firm for Truth.

Galatians 2:1-10. The great controversy in Paul's career was over the initial rite of Judaism. It would have been comparatively calm, if he had been willing to admit that Christianity was a sect of Judaism, and that men must become Jews before becoming Christians. His contention was that the *ceremonial* aspect of the Law did not apply to converts from heathendom. Gentile sinners had the right to go *directly* to Jesus Christ for salvation, without traveling around the circuitous route of Judaism. When men *insisted* on the outward rite, he *resisted* it with all the fiery vehemence of his nature, vs. 3 and 12. But when his opponents were willing to admit that circumcision was not essential, he administered it to one of Jewish blood, as a concession to the weak and uninstructed, Acts 16: 3.

What blessed intercourse the four men here named must have enjoyed together! *James* would tell of the earlier biography of Jesus, in the home of Nazareth; *Peter* would dwell upon his own fellowship with Christ throughout our Lord's active ministry; *John* would unfold Jesus' inner life, as he afterwards did in his Gospel; *Paul* would tell of that revelation of the risen Christ on the Damascus road. Note that God must work *in* and *for* us, if we are to succeed in the gospel ministry. See v. 8.

5. Living by Faith in Christ.

Galatians 2:11-21. Evidently Peter had gone back from the clear revelation of Acts 10, and from his former practice as stated in v. 12. The fear of the conservative party of the mother Church had brought him into a snare. His example had a very unfortunate effect upon the rest of the Hebrew Christians, who took their lead from him. But Paul's remonstrance probably brought Peter back to his former and happier practice.

Paul goes on to show that the death of Christ has taken us altogether out of the realm of the ancient

Law, with its restrictions and distinctions between clean and unclean, Jew and Gentile, vs. 15-19. If the conservative view was right, and it was wrong to eat with the Gentiles, then all that Christ had done and taught was in vain. Indeed, he had become a minister to sin, v. 17, because he had taught his people to associate with Gentiles. But such a suggestion was, of course, unthinkable, and therefore Peter was wrong in withdrawing from Gentile fellowship.

Then the Apostle breaks out into the memorable confession of the power of the Cross in his own life, vs. 20, 21. It stood between him and the past. His self-life was nailed there, and this new life was no longer derived from vain efforts to keep the Law, but from the indwelling and uprising of the life of Jesus—the perennial spring of John 4:14.

6. Righteousness Based on Faith.

Galatians 3:1-10. The strong tendency of the Galatian Christians to depend upon ceremonies or upon legal obedience, *in addition* to their faith in Christ, elicits in this chapter a magnificent demonstration of the simplicity and sufficiency of faith alone.

Faith had underlain the commencement of their Christian life, vs. 1-5. They had found peace with God through faith. Through faith they had received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. As they had begun, so let them finish!

Faith had been the means, too, of Abraham's acceptance with God, vs. 6-10. From the first the gospel of faith had been proclaimed to him by the divine Spirit. Long before he had become a Jew by the initial rite of Judaism, he had been a humble believer in God's promise, on the basis of which he was reckoned righteous. Simple faith was the only condition that he had fulfilled, and the promise that all flesh should be blessed through him had been given when he was still a believing Gentile. Surely what had sufficed for the father of the faithful was good enough for his children! Let

each reader see to it that he does not merely believe *about* Christ, but believes *in* him, so as to be no longer under the curse, but within the blessing.

7. Inheritors of the Promise.

Galatians 3:11-19. We are not under ceremonial law, as contained in the precepts of Leviticus. Our Saviour has perfectly fulfilled them on the behalf of the Jewish people, whom he represented from his birth until his death. The law of ordinances is then abrogated on their behalf; and we Gentiles have never been placed under its thrall. As to the curse that is uttered against every one, whether Jew or Gentile, that offends against the moral code declared in the Ten Commandments at Sinai, our Saviour has redeemed us from that by becoming accursed for us. There is nothing for us to do but to trust in his finished work, and to enter upon the same heritage of blessed service as was unfolded to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-13.

The Mosaic dispensation was a parenthesis in God's dealings with man. It was intended to produce conviction of sin. When God's ideal is held up before us, we become conscious of our deformities and our sins, and are driven to Christ. Let us see to it that we are truly united to him who is the predicted seed of Abraham; for as we stand in him, we become heirs to all the wealth of promise which is contained in the ancient covenant, made to the father of all who believe.

8. The Law Leads to Christ.

Galatians 3: 20-29. The Mosaic law was not designed to be the final code of the religious life, but to prepare the soil of the human heart to receive Jesus Christ in all the fullness of his salvation. It was the tutor of the Hebrew people, to enable them to become the religious teachers of mankind. It could not, therefore, take the place of the great covenant of grace, which had been initiated with Abraham before he had received the rite of circumcision, and when he thus stood for *all*

who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. The mistake of those against whom Paul contended was that they treated as permanent a system which was temporary and parenthetic in its significance.

With many individuals now, as with the Hebrew race, there is often a period in which the conscience is confronted with the holy demands of God's law, which men cannot keep; but when they discover the full grace of God in Christ, they no longer suffer at the hand of the schoolmaster, but become as children in the Father's home. They put on Christ and stand accepted in the Beloved, and understand that they are in unity with all who believe. Theirs are all the promises that were made to Abraham, and as his spiritual children they claim their fulfilment.

9. Live as Sons, Not as Bondmen.

Galatians 4:1-11. The Apostle often uses the word *elements* or "rudiments," vs. 3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20. High and holy as was the Mosaic legislation in itself, yet when it was imposed upon inquiring minds as necessary to salvation, Paul spoke of it as belonging to an age that had passed away and to a system that was already antiquated. The whole purpose of God in sending forth his Son was to redeem us from under the Law, that we might enjoy the liberty and joy of the Father's home. We are no longer infants under age, or servants, but sons, and if sons, then heirs of God.

There is often a slavishness among professing Christians that is sadly out of keeping with their rightful position in Christ. Do not be scrupulous or over-anxious. Do not be punctilious. Live in your Father's house in constant freedom of heart. Remember that you are under the same roof as Christ, and are therefore allowed to avail yourself of all his grace and help. Refuse no task, however irksome, that God sets before you; and do not worry about irksome rules or petty vexations.

10. Truthful and Devoted Dealing.

Galatians 4:12-20. How great a loss is it when we allow ourselves to be diverted from the simplicity of faith to trust in ceremonies, rites, and a prescribed routine! Inevitably these bring us into bondage. Let us therefore not pay slavish attention to the outward, but seek to have Christ within, and from within he will become the energy and passion of a new life. Each time we yield to the prompting of his Spirit, there is less of self and more of him.

In v. 15 we perhaps have a hint as to the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh. This reference has led many to suppose that he suffered from acute ophthalmia, or inflammation of the eyes. But nothing diverted him from his soul-travail on behalf of his converts, v. 19. What a beautiful analogy we may trace between the formation of Christ in the soul and the formation of a chick in the egg! At first the tiny germ of life is hardly discernible amid the viscous matter in which it floats; but, day by day, there is less of this and more of the tiny creature which is being formed. So in regeneration the life of Christ is implanted, which will continue to increase until all of self will be lost in the one infilling Presence.

11. "Children of Promise."

Galatians 4:21-31. In this allegory of Sarah and Hagar, it is important to notice that Paul is not dealing with the principle of evil within our hearts, but with the attempt to mingle two dispensations or methods of religious experience—the Law and the Gospel.

He says that the poor slave girl, Hagar, whom Abraham bought as a personal attendant for his wife, stands for Mount Sinai, the mountain of the Law, in the district of Arabia, from which she may have originally come. Hagar also stands for the Judaizers, whose headquarters were at Jerusalem, while their emissaries everywhere dogged the Apostle's movements, insisting that his converts must come under the old Levitical

ceremonialism. Paul says that the Galatians must choose between their slavish observance of outward ritual and a simple faith in the finished work of Jesus; and exhorts them to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, which savor of the flesh, and to give themselves to the service of the Spirit, which stands for freedom, peace, and joy in God. Let *us* also guard against a religious scrupulosity and subservience to the outward, and cultivate a quick sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit.

12. Hold Fast Your Freedom.

Galatians 5:1-12. We are free. The Son has made us free, and we are free indeed, though not free to disobey the dictates and promptings of our new nature. We are set free from minute prescriptions, from priestly rules and requisitions, from all that would cramp and hinder our spiritual development; but we are still under the law of Christ, who will see to it that the essential righteousness of the Mosaic law is fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. 8:1.

If the Mosaic law is kept as a means of salvation, we must fulfill it all, v. 3. For himself, as "we" suggests, v. 5, Paul had an assured confidence that his hope could not be disappointed. Christ is ever calling us upward, v. 8. Be on guard against the ferment of false teaching, v. 9. The Apostle shows the absurdity of supposing that he was in favor of circumcision, since, if that were the case, the long persecution of his life would cease, v. 11. These verses were in Bunyan's mind when he depicted Mr. Worldly Wiseman, of the town of Carnal Policy, as endeavoring to turn Christian out of the Way of the Cross to the house of Mr. Legality.

13. Produce the Fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:13-26. That Christ has freed us from the Law as a means of salvation does not free us from moral restraint, but brings us under the constraint of

a higher law, the law of love. We do not keep this law to be saved; but, being saved, we keep it out of love toward Christ. The power of the new life is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Unite yourself with his life that you find rising up within you. Live in the Spirit. A child was much disappointed because when she took a cupful of water out of the blue lake, it did not look blue in the cup; so her teacher told her to throw the cup into the midst of the lake and leave it there. As we live and walk in the Spirit, we are safe.

The Holy Spirit brings influences to bear which act upon the germs of sin, as a disinfectant upon the germs of disease. If we yield ourselves to these influences, and are filled with the Spirit of Jesus, we shall be delivered from the self-life, which the Apostle describes as *the flesh*. As Jesus is more and more formed in us, the new flower and fruitage of the risen life will appear, while the corrupt works of the flesh will shrink and drop away.

14. Our Own and Others' Burdens.

Galatians 6:1-10. The spirit of the world gloats over sin; the Spirit of Christ leads us to restore the sinner. Our first thought should never be of revenge or contempt, or of the adjustment of our own claims, but rather of how to help our fallen brother to regain his old place in the love of God. The memory of our own temptations and failures should make us very pitiful and tender. The Apostle does not speak, in this place, of premeditated sin, but of that by which we are entrapped and taken unawares.

The most spiritual men in the Church are needed for this holy work of restoration, and they must do it with great meekness and humility. It is thus that we bear one another's burdens; but there are some burdens that each must bear for himself alone, such as his own existence and personal accountability to God.

Life is a seedtime. It is the opportunity of preparing for heavenly harvests. The open furrows in-

vite the seed, and every moment, in some form, we scatter seeds that we shall inevitably meet again in their fruition. Let us remember especially our obligations to God's own children.

15. Glorying in the Cross Alone.

Galatians 6:11-18. Paul usually dictated his letters, but this was written with his own hand. The characters were large and clear, v. 11, R.V. Perhaps this was due to the trouble with his eyesight referred to in 4:15. But the Apostle gloried in the scars that suffering had left upon his frame, because they seemed to him the brand-marks of the happy slavery of Jesus, v. 17. If Judaizing teachers gloried in their brand-marks, how much more did he in his! The Cross had cut him off from the world. He was indifferent to worldly praise or blame; he took his marching-orders from Christ alone. This is the third time in his Epistle that Paul names the reflex influence of the Cross. See 2:20; 5:24; 6:14. Compare v. 15 with 1 Cor. 7:19.

Notice the breadth of the Apostle's benediction, v. 16. When we have been created anew in Christ's likeness and are walking by that rule, we find ourselves at once introduced into a family of kindred spirits, who have passed through the same radical change and are united beneath the gracious canopy of mercy and peace. Such are God's Israel. See 3:7.

(*For Review Questions see next page.*)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

OUTLINE.

(*a*) How does Paul in this Epistle defend his own position as an Apostle?
(*b*) How does he show that the gospel is a message of freedom?

INTRODUCTION.

(*c*) When did Paul visit Galatia? What was the immediate result of his labors?
(*d*) How was the development of this work obstructed?
(*e*) How was this letter designed to meet the situation?

SECTIONS 1–15. CHAPTERS 1–6.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. What surprising situation had now developed in the Galatian church?
2. How had Paul received the gospel which he preached?
3. How did Paul first become acquainted with Peter?
4. To what work were Paul and Barnabas committed by the Apostles at Jerusalem?
5. For what had Paul been obliged to blame Peter? How does Paul contrast his past and present life?
6. How does Paul show the all-sufficiency of faith?
7. What is the relation of the Law to the covenant with Abraham?
8. What was the purpose of the Law?
9. What testimony does the Spirit bear in our hearts?
10. How had the Galatians showed their devotion and loyalty to Paul?
11. What allegorical use does Paul make of the story of Sarah and Hagar?
12. Why is compromise between grace and legalism impossible?
13. In what word is the whole Law fulfilled? What is the fruit of the Spirit?
14. Why should we help bear the burdens of others?
15. In what alone does Paul glory?

VI

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

"THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS"

SALUTATION ..... 1:1, 2.

PART ONE: CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS ..... 1:3—3:21.

I. THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE 1:3–14.
1. *The Work of the Father* ..... 1:3–6.
2. *The Work of the Son* ..... 1:7–12.
3. *The Work of the Spirit* ..... 1:13, 14.

II. THE FAITH OF THE EPHESIANS ..... 1:15–23.
1. *Thanksgiving for Their Present Faith* ..... 1:15.
2. *Prayer for Their Fuller Enlightenment* ..... 1:16–23.

III. PAST AND PRESENT CONTRASTED ..... 2.
1. *The Former Manner of Life of the Ephesians* ..... 2:1–3.
2. *How They Have Been Redeemed* ... 2:4–10.
3. *The Former Character of the Ephesians* ..... 2:11, 12.
4. *How They Have Been Transformed* 2:13–22.

IV. PAUL'S SPECIAL MINISTRY ..... 3.
1. *The Gentiles Are Fellow-Heirs of the Gospel* ..... 3:1–13.
2. *Prayer That the Ephesians May Realize Their Privilege* ..... 3:14–19.
3. *Doxology* ..... 3:20, 21.

PART TWO: FOR GOOD WORKS .....4:1—6:20.

I. The Christian in the Church.....4:1–16.

1. *Uniformity of Christian Character* 4:1–6.
2. *Variety of Christian Service* .....4:7–12.
3. *Culmination of Christian Development* .....4:13–16.

II. The Christian in the World.....4:17—5:21.

1. *Pagan Living Does Not Befit Christians* .....4:17–24.
2. *Points of Contrast* .....4:25–32.
3. *Living in the Light* .....5:1–14.
4. *Living in the Lord* .....5:15–21.

III. The Christian in the Home .....5:22—6:9.

1. *Duties of Wives* .....5:22–24.
2. *Duties of Husbands* .....5:25–33.
3. *Duties of Children* .....6:1–3.
4. *Duties of Parents* .....6:4.
5. *Duties of Servants* .....6:5–8.
6. *Duties of Masters* .....6:9.

IV. The Good Fight of the Faith.....6:10–20.

1. *The Whole Armor of God* .....6:10–17.
2. *Prevailing Prayer* .....6:18–20.

Conclusion .....6:21–24.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Paul's first visit to Ephesus is related in Acts 18:19-21. The work commenced then was carried on by Apollos. On Paul's second visit he remained three years. Later, on his way to Jerusalem, he held an affecting interview at Miletus with the elders of the Ephesian church. This Epistle was addressed to that church about four years afterward, during the early part of his imprisonment at Rome, and immediately after that to the Colossians, to which it bears a close resemblance. The foundation, course and destiny of the Church are the sublime subjects with which the Epistle deals, and the style is of a correspondingly elevated character.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

1. Our Riches in Christ.

Ephesians 1:1-14. This has been called the "Epistle of *In-ness*," because it is so full of the preposition *in*. *Saints* are flesh and blood like ourselves, and *we* may be saints. The word means "set apart." We are in Christ and he is in us, and any goodness we have is due to our giving room and scope to him to realize his own ideals. To be in the heavenlies, v. 3, means to live a spiritual life and to draw our reinforcements from the unseen and eternal world, which is focused in our Lord. We are in him so far as justification is concerned—that is our standing; and he is in us for sanctification—that is the source of a holy and useful life. The condition of a blessed life is the conscious maintenance of this oneness.

The source of all we are, and have, and hope to be, so far as salvation is concerned, is the will of God for us; but the stream flows to us through our Lord, and the end to which all things are moving is the summing-up of all in Christ. As he was the Alpha, so he will be the Omega. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is of incalculable advantage, because it means that we are stamped with the likeness of Christ and so kept inviolate among all the vicissitudes of life. See Esther 8:8; John 6:27.

2. What the Heart May Receive.

Ephesians 1:15-23. It is well to go over the successive links of this golden chain when we are in our secret chamber, appropriating them one by one and asking whether we have received a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Christ, and whether the eyes of our heart have been enlightened to know the hope, the riches, the glory, and the greatness of his power. In

so far as we yield ourselves to the strength of God's might, he will raise us from the grave of selfishness and cause us to sit with Christ in the place of spiritual life and power.

Notice the emphasis with which the Apostle affirms the supremacy of Christ's nature, vs. 21, 22. This is a psalm of ascension. We can almost follow his tracks, as all the evil powers which rule the darkness of this world drop far beneath him. The ascending Lord is high over all, and if we claim our right as members of his glorified body, we also shall stand above all our spiritual adversaries; and it is easier to descend on an enemy from above him than to seek to assail him from beneath. Notice that Christ needs the Church as much as the head needs the body, because it is through the Church that he fulfills himself. Ask him to fill all of you with all of him.

3 What Grace Has Done.

Ephesians 2:1-10. Evidently dead men may walk; that is, they may be dead to the eternal world but alive to this world, which is moving past like the films of a moving picture. The death of the spirit is compatible with much active interest in *the course of this world.* Behind the shifting scenes of the material is the great enemy of souls. As the Spirit of God works in the obedient, so does the evil spirit work in the disobedient. Note this trinity of evil—the course of this *world,* the lusts of our *flesh,* and the *prince* of the power of the air. If we desire to save men, we must be in living union with the all-conquering Spirit of Christ.

Notice, also, the past tense which describes the finality of Christ's work, vs. 5, 6. In the purpose of God we have been raised from the grave of sin and are seated with the risen Lord in the place of acceptance and victory. We were one with Christ when he lay in the grave and arose. In God's thought we have already taken our seat with the glorified Christ upon the

MAIN STREET, EPHESUS.

From a Photograph.

throne; only the pity is that we do not believe this or act as if we had done so. All this is the gift of God's unmerited love. By grace have we been brought into this position, and by grace are we maintained in it. We are of God's "making"; such is the Greek word for *workmanship*, v. 10. We have been created for good works; they have been planned for us and we have only to walk in them.

4. Reconciled and United by the Cross.

Ephesians 2:11-22. The state of the unconverted must be described by a series of negations. Shut the sun out of the world, love out of the home, liberty out of the state! The unsaved know not of their infinite loss; but if they could see what we inherit through union with Jesus, they could cease to wonder that we run not with them into the same excess of riot. Does a maiden need much persuasion to cast aside paste jewels when real ones are offered her?

There was no natural affinity between Jew and Gentile. This arose partly because of diverse nationality and genius; but in addition the whole code of Jewish customs as to eating clean meats and ceremonial pollution, prevented it. All these party-walls of division were swept away by Christ. In him, as the corner-stone, two walls, running in different directions, met. Two sections of humanity, East and West, became united to each other, because each was united to him, and thus was formed a new unit of humanity.

What a noble conception is given of the Church and ultimately of the redeemed race, growing slowly through the ages and becoming God's dwelling-place! Notice the Trinity; through Jesus, the Eternal Father comes by his Spirit to dwell in the heart of man.

5. Gentiles Share the "Unspeakable Riches."

Ephesians 3:1-13. Dispensation should be rendered, "stewardship." We are God's trustees for men. To each of us is given some special phase of truth which

we must pass on to others by the force of our character or by the teaching of our lips. It was given to Paul to make known the great truth that Gentiles might enter the Church of God on equal terms with Jews. During the earlier stages of human education this secret had been withheld; but with the advent of the Son of man, the doors into the Church had been thrown open to all. Paul's insistence on this truth was the main cause of the hatred and opposition which checkered his life. Fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers! This truth was not the result of logical argument, but had been communicated by direct revelation, as was so much else in Paul's teaching. See Gal. 1:11, etc.

The history of the Church—its genesis, growth, and development—is the subject of angelic study, v. 10. In the story of redemption there are presented and illustrated aspects of the divine nature which are to be learned nowhere else, and therefore heavenly intelligences bend with eager interest over human history from the viewpoint of the Church of Christ.

6. The Greatest of All Desires.

Ephesians 3:14-21. The kernel of this prayer is in the clause that Christ may make his home in the believer's heart through faith. The previous petitions lead up to this. Note the Apostle's attitude—with bended knee; his plea with God—that he is the Father from whom all family love emanates; his measure—the wealth of God's glorious perfection; the necessary preliminary to Christ's indwelling—the penetration of our inmost being with the strength of the Holy Spirit. And then note the outcome: The indwelling Christ means that we shall be rooted and grounded in love. When this is the case we shall understand his love; and when we experience and know Christ's love, we shall be as completely filled in our little measure as God is in his great measure.

A dying veteran in Napoleon's army, when the surgeon was probing for the fatal bullet, said, "A little deeper and you will find the Emperor." Faith opens the door to the Spirit; the Spirit reveals Christ; Christ fills the heart; the heart begins to understand love; and love is the medium through which we become infilled with God, for God is love. It is staggering to ask all this; but the God who works in us with such power is able to do more than we ask, more than we think—abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more.

7. Keeping the "Unity of the Spirit."

Ephesians 4:1-10. Paul here admonishes lowliness in the presence of another's excellence; meekness in suffering injury; long-suffering under provocation; forbearance toward the trying mistakes and failures of others. Remember that the unity of the Church, as the body of Christ, is already made; but it is for us to maintain it. We must avoid whatever in word or deed would break it. There are seven different bonds of unity, but of these the greatest is the nature of God, which is transcendent, *who is above all;* penetrant, *through all;* and immanent, *in all.* Each saint has some grace or gift; use it. On the whole, after we reach maturity, we had better center on what we can do best.

What a magnificent conception is given in vs. 8 and 9 of the ascended Christ! The original conception was supplied by Deborah in her noble song. Descending from her morning vigil on Tabor, she summoned Barak to lead captive the foe who for so long had held the land in captivity. But in Jesus' ascension, a long procession of yet mightier foes was led captive by him. Among them were Death, the Grave, and Hades, the underworld. It is from the hands of Jesus that even the rebellious may obtain their gifts. There is no depth to which Jesus will not go to save; no height to which he will not lift us!

8. Building Up the "Body of Christ."

Ephesians 4:11-19. Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, are the gifts of the risen Christ to his Church. There should be no rivalry among them. Each has his own work to do, as each wheel in a watch has its special function. None can do the work of another, and none should try to do it. The Apostles laid the foundations of the City of God, and the work of each is represented by a different stone. The pastor prepares the ground and sows the seed for the harvest which the evangelist reaps; but God will proportion the reward between them. The teacher is as much needed as the evangelist, but neither is so essential as God, who giveth the increase. Without that all labor would be in vain.

We learn from v. 12 that the prime duty of all these agents is not to baptize, marry, and bury the saints, to comfort and console them, and to get them somehow into heaven, as the Arab guides get travelers to the top of the Pyramids. Their duty is to perfect, that is, to adjust, the saints for the work of ministry, that they may contribute to the building up of the Church. A minister is a failure if he does all the work himself. The people must all be at work—in the quarries, or shaping the stones, or fitting them into their places.

9. Putting on the "New Man."

Ephesians 4:20-32. The Lord Jesus is our text-book and our teacher, the schoolhouse in which we are taught, and the object lesson in which all truth is enshrined. But all is in vain unless we definitely and forever put away the old man; that is, our old manners and customs in so far as they are contrary to the Spirit of Christ. With equal decision we are called upon to seek the daily renewal of our spirit and the outward conformity of our mode of life to the example of Jesus. But it should never be forgotten that the latter will be a dry husk unless it is energized from the true vine.

There can be little of Christ *without* unless he dwells without a rival *within*. But the Holy Spirit will see to this, if only we grieve him not.

What a transformation immediately ensues! Truth instead of falsehood, gentleness for anger, earnest toil for dishonesty, cleansed instead of filthy speech. If all believers were to live like this, the world would know that the Son of God has come. It is not enough that a man should believe to secure deliverance from the wrath of God; he must daily seek to attain to such resemblance of Jesus as shall make men recall him to mind.

10. Walk as Children of Light.

Ephesians 5:1-12. It is indeed a high calling to imitate God and to walk in love after the measure of Christ; but it will be impossible unless we open our innermost heart to the Holy Spirit. We must not only sacrifice ourselves for others, but there should be a fragrance in all that we do. "An odor of a sweet smell." Note carefully the injunctions of vs. 3 and 4, especially as they concern speech. It is by our speech that we betray the true condition of our hearts.

We must be as distinct from the worldly as light is from darkness. There should be no twilight in our testimony for our Lord, though there may be considerable obscurity in our views of truth. Whatever is unfruitful; whatever we should blush to have transcribed and read to the world; whatever would be inconsistent with the strong, clear light of the throne of God and the Lamb, must be avoided. We must walk in the light of the Lord. Then we ourselves shall become luminous, as some diamonds do after being held in sunshine. People who love darkness will avoid and hate us; but their treatment may be only a cause for our own encouragement, as God becomes increasingly precious to us.

11. "Redeeming the Time."

Ephesians 5:13-21. The earlier verses remind us of Isaiah 60. Awake, thou Christian soul; arise from the

dust and put on thy beautiful garments! Stand on the mountain-peak of prayer and Christ shall shine on thee as when morning gilds the highest Alps! The child of God must arise from among those who are yet in their graves, dead in trespasses and sins. He can have no complicity or fellowship with such. Is there effort in this, and cost? Christ will more than compensate. He will satisfy.

The opportunities of life are fleeting past; let us buy them up. They are most valuable, because they form the seed plot of eternity. In the other life we shall reap the harvests which we have prepared for here. "Give every flying minute something to keep in store." Chrysostom, as a young man, kept silent for days together to break himself of a bad habit of detraction. But the Apostle's method is better. Make room for the Holy Spirit. Be filled with him, and he will use heart and lip in the service of praise and thanksgiving. It is as much our duty to be filled with the Spirit as it is not to get drunk. Remember to give thanks *always* for *all* things. Whether you like the packing-case or not, you may be sure that the *contents* are the very best that God could send you.

12. Love of Husband and Wife.

Ephesians 5:22-33. The Apostle has been urging us to be filled with the Spirit, and now proceeds to show how Spirit-filled people should act in their homes. He has been exhorting to praise and joyfulness, and now urges that our lives, as well as our lips, should be attuned to music.

What a lofty ideal of wedded love is here! Chrysostom says: "Wouldest thou that thy wife obey thee as the Church doth Christ? Have care for her, then, as Christ for the Church." Our earthly relationships are similitudes and emblems of sacred realities, and the more we can import into the time sphere the inspiration and virtue of the eternal, the more transcendental and beautiful will they become. The Lord has taught

us the utter renunciation of love. Men of the world reckon how much love they can *get;* the children of eternity how much they can *give;* but such giving always means getting back with compound interest. Notice those phrases about nourishing and cherishing. O wounded member of Christ's body, he suffers in thee, nourishes, cherishes, and will heal!

13. Children and Parents; Servants and Masters.

Ephesians 6:1-12. Where our religion is true, it will affect every relationship in life. The love of Christ must find its manifestation in nursery and in kitchen, in workshop and in municipal chamber. But notice that its duties are reciprocal. We must give on our side, just as we expect others to give on theirs.

The first duty of children is *obedience.* They must be taught to obey because it is right, and their conscience bears witness to the rightness. Never *plead* with a child to do what is right, nor *bribe* it by a reward. Take your stand on that primeval sense of right and wrong, which is the foundation of morals and will be the stay of the child's whole after-life, when once its supremacy is established. But parents should help their children by removing irritation or passion from their own speech. *Slaves* formed a large proportion of the early Church. Their obedience must be explicit, and they were taught to believe that Christ took their faithful service to their earthly owner as service to himself. But *masters* must ever deal with their servants as liable to be called to account by the great Master of all. The center of all authority is Christ, and he will demand an account of our treatment of every servant he has sent into our homes.

14. "Finally, Be Strong in the Lord."

Ephesians 6:13-24. Many would be strong, but fail because they forget that they can be effectively so only "in the Lord, and in the strength of his might." Paul had a very vivid conception of the powerful forces

that are arrayed against the Church. He is not dealing here especially with our personal temptations, but with those hosts of wicked spirits that lie behind the evil of the world. It is probable that the vast systems which oppose the gospel—the philosophies, temples, and priests of false religions; the trade in strong drink, impurity, and like evils; and such iniquitous institutions as the system of indentured slavery—are directly promoted and furthered by the agency of evil spirits in arms against God.

We must be pure and holy, if we are to prevail against evil; and especially must we give ourselves to prayer. To prevail in this warfare we must diligently employ the weapon of *all prayer*. Tychicus carried this letter. He was faithful to the end, Acts 20:4; 2 Tim. 4:12. The Epistle closes, as it began, with uncorrupted, that is, pure and eternal, love. Alford says, "This is the only truth worthy to be the crown and climax of this glorious Epistle."

(*For Review Questions see next page.*)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

OUTLINE.

(*a*) Into what two parts does this Epistle naturally divide, and what is the theme of each?

(*b*) What different relationships of the Christian does it treat?

INTRODUCTION.

(*c*) What was the occasion of Paul's first visit to Ephesus? Who continued the work which the Apostle began?

(*d*) How long did Paul labor here at a later time? When did he see the elders of the church for the last time?

(*e*) When was the Epistle to the Ephesians written? What other Epistle does it closely resemble? What is said of its theme and style?

SECTIONS 1–14. CHAPTERS 1–6.

(Each question applies to the paragraph of corresponding number in the Comments.)

1. What is this Epistle sometimes called? What is the condition of a blessed life?
2. How does Paul describe the position occupied by the risen Christ?
3. What are the achievements of grace in the believer?
4. How is the present condition of the Ephesians contrasted with their former condition?
5. Why was it remarkable that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the promise in Christ?
6. What was Paul's great prayer for the Ephesian Christians?
7. What are the fruits of Christ's ascension for believers?
8. What are some of the different offices in the Church? What is their common purpose?
9. What are the practical evidences of a godly life?

10. How is the Christian to be distinguished from the worldling?
11. Why is the Christian life a joyful life?
12. How is the marriage relation sanctified in Christ?
13. What is the first duty of children?
14. What is the armor of the Christian? What is Paul's final request of the Ephesian church?

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